

**THE MAN WHO TAMED MEXICO'S TIGER:
GENERAL JOAQUIN AMARO
AND THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF
MEXICO'S REVOLUTIONARY ARMY**

BY

ROBERT CARRIEDO

B.S., International Affairs, U.S. Air Force Academy, 1984
M.A., Latin American Studies, University of Florida, 1992

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
History**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the military career of General Joaquín Amaro, the officer most responsible for professionalizing the Mexican military after the tumultuous years of the Mexican Revolution. After 1917, with the most violent phase of the Revolution over, the military forces that crushed Mexican President Porfirio Díaz's Federal Army proved to be a two-edged sword. While effective in overthrowing Díaz, Mexico's revolutionary armies neither disbanded nor submitted themselves to civilian rule, but instead retained their character as undisciplined and fiercely independent armies whose ultimate loyalty lay with their commanding generals. Amaro's significance resides not so much in his colorful battlefield experiences, where he clashed with the forces of such well-known generals as Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Emiliano Zapata, but rather in his relatively long tenure as Secretary of War (1925-1931), and as the Mexican military's first Director of Military Education (1931-1935).

During this critical ten-year period, Amaro undertook the difficult task—and by historical standards, a nearly impossible task—of transforming Mexico’s military from its *de facto* role as arbiter of political policies and presidential succession to one that was largely supportive of and loyal to the government. While explanations for this transition tend to focus on structural changes, i.e., putting down rebellions, scaling back forces, and transferring unruly generals, such explanations remain incomplete. In truth, the most fascinating aspect of Amaro’s brilliant military career stemmed from his strategy of professionalizing Mexico’s unruly and factionalized post-revolutionary army through a process of cultural reeducation that replaced an entrenched tradition of militarism with one emphasizing such values as discipline, duty, honor, and loyalty to the civilian government. As this dissertation will show, Amaro carried out his “moralization” program of cultural reeducation through an overhaul of the military’s legal system, the publication and dissemination of military journals, and most significantly, the establishment of a comprehensive military educational system that eventually affected every soldier.

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Figure 1. Military Education Process in Mexico.198

The three great enemies of the Mexican people are clericalism, capitalism, and militarism. We [the military] can get rid of clericalism and capitalism, but, afterwards, who will get rid of us?

General Alvaro Obregón
March 1915

PREFACE

It's not everyday that I look forward to visiting a cemetery. But March 15, 2004, the day of my much anticipated visit, was not just any other day. As luck would have it, that particular day was the 52nd anniversary of the death of General Joaquín Amaro, the very subject of my doctoral dissertation, and I just happened to be in Mexico City at the time conducting research. Having already spent several weeks in the archives combing through file after file of the general's personal papers, I welcomed the chance to change my routine and visit the *Panteón Francés de San Joaquín*, the cemetery where Amaro was buried, or, more accurately, reburied, after having been moved in 1966 from his original burial site at the *Panteón Francés de la Piedad*.

Like most mornings during my stay in Mexico City, I awoke early from my guest quarters at the archive where I was both staying and conducting research, and made my way down the stairs and outside the gate to grab a quick breakfast from the nearby *panadería*, or bakery. Only this time, of course, I didn't immediately return to the archive. Armed with a map and written instructions from Jorge, the guard at the archive who did his best to explain Mexico City's incredibly complex public transportation system, I continued my walk down the attractive, tree-lined Sonora Avenue until I reached the *paradero*, or bus stop, near the Chapultepec metro station. Fairly confident that I was standing in the correct line to catch my bus—there are no signs at the paraderos to explain the city's bus routes to confused foreigners—I eventually boarded the small green and white bus that would take me to the cemetery.

Packed with far more people than I ever imagined possible, the bus pulled out of the paradero and quickly made its way onto Paseo de la Reforma, the main avenue that passed through Mexico City's famed Chapultepec Park. Not fortunate enough to get a seat, I hunched down from my standing position in the center isle to look out the left window and briefly glimpsed the handsome statue of Amaro—sitting proudly astride his majestic horse—that had been erected in the 1960s. Had I looked out the right side, I would have caught sight of the street where Amaro once lived. As the bus continued its journey, I checked to make sure that I had brought my camera, for Amaro's anniversary had always been marked with great fanfare by the Mexican Army, and I wanted to refer to the pictures when describing the large military procession that would soon take place to commemorate the death of this famous Mexican general.

After a quick change of buses, I finally arrived at the *Panteón Francés de San Joaquín*. Upon entering the main gate, I casually inquired as to where and when the commemoration for Amaro would take place. That's probably when I should have realized that, although I had taken note of Amaro's anniversary, no one else seemed to have remembered. The official at the entrance had no idea whom I was talking about, nor did the office clerk, who had a difficult time even locating Amaro's cemetery plot. Nor was the clerk aware of any military procession scheduled at all that day. But surely, I thought, the Mexican Army would be on hand, as they always had been in the past, to lay a wreath at Amaro's tomb and perhaps pronounce a moving eulogy in his honor. Certainly the Mexican Army would not forget one of their most famous generals. Yet, when I arrived at Amaro's tomb, no one was there. No military procession, no family members, no stirring eulogies, and, much to my chagrin, no pictures. Could it be that

Mexico had forgotten one of its most important generals? Could it be that Amaro's story, his amazing military career and the role he played in shaping the modern Mexican military, was no longer recognized? Well then, I thought, this must be the right time to tell his story.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:

JOAQUIN AMARO, THE MAN WHO TAMED MEXICO'S TIGER

On November 20th, 1910, after thirty-five years of rule under President Porfirio Díaz, Mexico exploded in a violent revolution.¹ Following the call of Francisco I. Madero, Díaz's political rival, to take up arms against the corrupt Mexican government, such legendary figures as Pascual Orozco and Francisco "Pancho" Villa in Chihuahua, the Arrieta brothers in Durango, and Emiliano Zapata in Morelos won a surprising number of bloody victories against Díaz's Federal Army. These victories, in turn, encouraged others to rebel, so that by 1911 revolutionary uprisings and political rioting occurred in virtually every region of Mexico. Díaz, who was 80 years old and showing signs of mental and physical exhaustion, gradually recognized the hopelessness of his situation. Thus, on May 25th, as angry mobs gathered in the downtown plaza, and with Federal troops deserting to the revolutionary armies *en masse*, Díaz reluctantly submitted his resignation and quickly fled by train to the coastal city of Veracruz. As he boarded

¹The secondary literature concerning the beginning events of the Mexican Revolution is extensive and well-established. Some of the most useful include: Charles C. Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution, Genesis Under Madero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1952); Ernest Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage* (New York: Century Company, 1928); Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986),; Frank Tannenbaum, *The Mexican Agrarian Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1930); and John Womack, Jr., *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).

the ship that would take him to exile in France, Díaz reportedly remarked: “Madero has unleashed a tiger; let us see if he can control him.”²

Madero had indeed unleashed a tiger, for the revolutionary armies that had ousted Díaz in 1910 refused to be caged. Instead, Mexico’s tiger attacked those Díaz supporters, the *porfiristas*, who did not flee, and then proceeded to brutally dismantle the remnants of Díaz’s Federal Army. At the same time, and particularly after 1914, when the *porfiristas* were defeated both politically and militarily, the tiger turned on itself, and thus the revolutionary armies battled each other as well, recklessly plunging Mexico into a devastating civil war that would last until 1917. The battlefield heroics of the powerful generals who led these revolutionary armies, such as Zapata, Villa, and Alvaro Obregón, have become legend, inspiring lyrics for countless Mexican ballads. As brave, powerful, and famous as these generals were, however, none of them ever did succeed in taming Mexico’s tiger. Instead, that distinction belongs to a small, battle-hardened, dark-skinned general named Joaquín Amaro. Amaro’s battlefield exploits during the Mexican Revolution, while impressive, ultimately pale in comparison to his accomplishment of controlling the disparate and fiercely independent revolutionary armies and then forging them into a cohesive, professional, and loyal military force.

How did Amaro accomplish this historic feat? One might logically assume that Amaro tamed the revolutionary armies through decisive battlefield victories, where, employing a strategy of brute military force, he crushed rebel armies and forcefully purged disloyal elements from the ranks of the officer corps. Others could logically point to the somewhat more mundane, if not equally effective method of reorganizing forces,

²Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution, Genesis Under Madero*, 151.

reducing troop levels, and slashing military budgets to rein in the military. Yet such explanations, while historically accurate, remain incomplete. In truth, the most fascinating aspect of Amaro's brilliant military career stemmed from his strategy of professionalizing Mexico's unruly and factionalized post-revolutionary army through a process of cultural reeducation that replaced an entrenched tradition of militarism with one emphasizing such values as discipline, duty, honor, and most importantly, loyalty to the civilian government. As this dissertation will show, Amaro carried out his "moralization" program of cultural reeducation through an overhaul of the military's legal system, the publication and dissemination of military journals, and most significantly, through the establishment of a comprehensive military educational system that eventually affected every soldier.

Review of the Literature

While the historiography of the Revolution is replete with works covering the war's profound political, economic, and social ramifications, along with biographies of the Revolution's many colorful actors, very little has been written concerning the critical transformation that occurred within the Mexican military itself, or on the Mexican military officer frequently credited for bringing about this difficult transformation: General Joaquín Amaro. Only recently has a Mexican scholar published a political biography of Amaro, while, prior to this dissertation, no scholarly treatment of this important general has existed in English.³ The lack of a scholarly treatment of Amaro in English remains all the more notable given the rich tradition among North American

³Martha Beatriz Loyo Camacho, *Joaquín Amaro y el proceso de institucionalización del Ejército Mexicano, 1917 – 1931* (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2003).

scholars who have published numerous biographies of prominent individuals of the revolutionary era, such as Zapata, Villa, Madero, Victoriano Huerta, Venustiano Carranza, Obregón, and Lázaro Cárdenas.⁴ The lack of works on Amaro parallels the relative lack of research concerning the Mexican military during its formative years after the Revolution (1917-1940), or, for that matter, on the Mexican military in general.

The lack of scholarly works concerning the Mexican military stands in contrast to the attention scholars have given the militaries in other regions of Latin America. To a certain extent, this focus on other Latin American nations may be due to the aggressive manner in which various militaries in South America during the 1960s and 1970s overthrew their civilian counterparts, and then, in contrast to previous coups, established repressive military regimes rather than return power to civilian officials. As military regimes in Peru, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile absorbed scholars' attention, a significant number focused their research on that aspect of civil-military relations that addresses the relationship between military professionalism and military political influence. In contrast to the prevailing theory, which stated that increased military professionalization will "depoliticize" the armed forces, these Latin Americanists argued that military professionalization encourages the military to assume an active and even dominant role in

⁴For example, see Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*; Samuel Brunk, *Emiliano Zapata: Revolution & Betrayal in Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995); Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998); Stanley R. Ross, *Francisco I. Madero, Apostle of Mexican Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955); Michael C. Meyer, *Huerta: A Political Portrait* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972); Douglas W. Richmond, *Venustiano Carranza's Nationalist Struggle, 1893-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Linda B. Hall, *Alvaro Obregón, Power and Revolution in Mexico, 1911-1920* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1981); William Cameron Townsend, *Lázaro Cárdenas: Mexican Democrat* (Ann Arbor, MI: George Wahr Publishing Co., 1952); and Nathaniel and Sylvia Weyl, *The Reconquest of Mexico: The Years of Lázaro Cárdenas* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939). In addition to these biographies, most of which focus on presidents, see Michael C. Meyer, *Mexican Rebel: Pascual Orozco and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1915* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967); and Dudley Ankersen, *Agrarian Warlord: Saturnino Cedillo and the Mexican Revolution in San Luis Potosí* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984).

politics. Perhaps because Mexico was one of the few Latin American nations not run by a military regime during the 1960s and 1970s, few scholars felt it necessary to examine the case of Mexico. In spite of the general lack of scholarly attention, however, it would be unfair to conclude that Mexico has been completely ignored. Thus this section will deal with those few works that have dealt with Amaro, the Mexican military, and Mexico's experience with military professionalization.

The first and only real scholarly treatment of Amaro is found in Martha Beatriz Loyo Camacho's book, *Joaquín Amaro y el proceso de institucionalización del Ejército Mexicano, 1917 – 1931*, published in 2003 and largely based on her 1998 doctoral dissertation.⁵ In this clearly written and well-researched book, Loyo traces Amaro's career from his enlistment as a lowly private in General Domingo Arrieta's revolutionary army to his meteoric rise nine years later to the status of a full-fledged general, and finally, to his promotion to Secretary of War. Loyo shows how throughout his early career, Amaro quickly merited the trust of two of Mexico's most important leaders, Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles. Amaro's competence as a battlefield commander, coupled with his intense loyalty to both Obregón and Calles, enabled Amaro to take his place among an elite group of military generals who sought to stabilize Mexico's fragile political situation by reigning in the independent and unpredictable revolutionary generals and restructuring their armies into a cohesive military institution. Loyo's explanation of how Amaro institutionalized the military is found in chapter five, where she focuses on the first two years of Amaro's tenure as Secretary of War (1925-1926) under President Calles. According to Loyo, Amaro utilized a variety of different strategies to break the power of the revolutionary generals, including reductions in the

⁵Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*.

military budget and personnel levels, the frequent transfer of generals from their regional commands, and a complete revision of the military legislation system regarding promotions, retirement, and organizational structure.

As the first scholar to document in detail Amaro's efforts at reforming the Mexican military, students and scholars alike are indebted to Loyo for bringing many of his accomplishments to light. Nevertheless, Amaro's tenure as Secretary of War lasted well beyond 1926, and arguably his most important and long-lasting contribution towards reforming the culture of militarism among the Mexican military occurred during his position as Mexico's first Director of Military Education (1931-1935). Amaro's work at physically restructuring the military as a way to reform it was important, but Amaro also recognized that the underlying problem plaguing the Mexican military remained first and foremost a cultural, not a structural, one. To Amaro's great credit, and to Mexico's great benefit, he embarked on an ambitious and sustained program of professional military education to solve the deep-seated culture of militarism that pervaded Mexico's armed forces. Thus it was Amaro's accomplishments in transforming the mind or ethos of the Mexican military, and not simply the structure of the military, that truly mark him as one of Mexico's most important military leaders. While a more in-depth discussion of Amaro's role as Secretary of War, as well as an examination of Amaro's tenure as Director of Military Education, may have been beyond the scope of Loyo's book, clearly such an analysis is needed if we are to fully understand both Amaro and the extent to which he transformed the Mexican military.

Just as Loyo stands out as the sole scholar who has written on Amaro, Edwin Lieuwen is virtually the only historian who has produced a book-length analysis of the

Mexican military as it emerged from the chaos of the Mexican Revolution. Although somewhat dated, Lieuwen's *Mexican Militarism* remains the classic explanation of how Mexico's leaders, themselves members of the military, reigned in the revolutionary generals and solved the problem of militarism that plagued the nation's post-revolutionary governments.⁶ Focusing specifically on the actions of the first four Mexican presidents after the Revolution, Lieuwen recounts how collectively they employed a three-fold strategy that included the use of armed labor and peasant militias to forcefully oppose any military rebellions, the development of a single "Revolutionary" political party that eventually incorporated the peasant, labor, military, and popular or government factions under its control, and the creation of a new corps of professionally trained officers who accepted the principle of loyalty to the government.⁷ It is in the context of this last point, the creation of a new corps of professionally trained officers, where Lieuwen discusses Amaro. Nevertheless, given Lieuwen's wide scope, Amaro is only one of a number of important actors in the book. Consequently, Lieuwen's discussion of Amaro's role in reorganizing the military comprises only ten pages, and only passing mention is made to his position as the Director of Military Education.⁸ As a result, it is difficult for one to grasp fully how it was that Amaro not only reorganized the military but also laid the groundwork for ending the ethos of "Mexican militarism."

⁶Edwin Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism: The Political Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army, 1910-1940* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1968).

⁷The creation of a single political party and its role in depoliticizing the Mexican military is covered extensively in Gordon C. Schloming "Civil-Military Relations in Mexico, 1910-1940" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1974). Since Lieuwen's *Mexican Militarism*, Schloming's unpublished dissertation has been the only in-depth analysis of the Mexican military during the Revolutionary era.

⁸Edwin Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 85-95, 111.

While books that focus specifically on Amaro and the Mexican military during the revolutionary era are scarce, the historiography dealing with the Mexican military in general is more extensive, although still limited. Jorge Alberto Lozoya's *El ejército mexicano (1911-1965)* describes the history of the Mexican military from colonial times to the 1960s, yet with such a grand sweep of history packed into a rather small book—between 89 and 126 pages, depending on the edition—Lozoya's treatment of the Mexican military at any given period is somewhat superficial.⁹ One of the book's main themes is that the Mexican military has undergone a gradual process of depoliticization, although clearly Lozoya is not arguing that the current Mexican military is completely apolitical. Until the publication of *El ejército mexicano* in 1970, the Mexican government considered books focusing on the Mexican military, other than those published by the government itself, to be “off-limits” to independent researchers. In this sense then, Lozoya has made a substantial contribution by breaking with this tradition, and especially in using interviews with high-ranking military officers for much of his information. Nevertheless, *El ejército mexicano* is sparsely documented, shows no evidence of archival research, and, aside from interviews, is drawn almost entirely from secondary sources.

In reaction to the heightened interest in the events surrounding the violent confrontation between the Mexican military and university students in 1968, as well as a belief among Mexicans that the military had taken a significant and growing role in shaping the policies of the Mexican government, Guillermo Boils published *Los militares*

⁹Jorge Alberto Lozoya, *El ejército mexicano (1911-1965)* (México: El Colegio de México, 1970). A second updated edition was published in 1976, followed by a third edition in 1984.

y la política en México, 1915-1974.¹⁰ Boils expresses a view popular among many scholars that the events of 1968 signified a profound change in Mexico's civil-military relations; while the Mexican military was previously subordinate to civilian rule, it now emerged as a competitor for political power.¹¹ Accordingly, *Los militares y la política en México* is primarily concerned with determining the current extent of the military's political influence, and therefore focuses on the Mexican military between the years 1968 and 1974, with the professionalization of the Mexican military after the Revolution serving only as a historical backdrop.

While Mexican scholars were the first to tackle the subject of the Mexican military, particularly in terms of civil-military relations, U.S. scholars have since devoted a moderate degree of scholarly attention to Mexico's armed forces. In March of 1984, the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the University of San Diego held a research workshop for the express purpose of stimulating new research and analysis on the Mexican military, both as an institution and as a political actor. One of the key participants in this workshop, David Ronfeldt, then compiled and edited several of the ensuing essays and published them in a volume entitled *The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment*.¹² While the nine essays in this volume cover a wide range of topics

¹⁰Guillermo Boils, *Los militares y la política en México, 1915-1974* (México: Ediciones El Caballito, 1975).

¹¹Ibid., 12-14. After several months of increasing tension between university students and the Mexican government, authorities responded to an October 1968 student demonstration at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in the Tlateloco district by ordering thousands of troops to confront the demonstrators. The ensuing violence resulted in the death of several hundred demonstrators, with several thousand more jailed. Much speculation remains as to whether General Marcelino García Barragán, Mexico's Secretary of Defense, simply carried out orders given by President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, or whether General Barragán took the initiative himself in authorizing his troops to use force against the demonstrators.

¹²David Ronfeldt, ed., *The Modern Mexican Army: A Reassessment* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1984). Three of the scholars participating in this workshop went on to write doctoral dissertations dealing with specific aspects of the Mexican military.

concerning the Mexican military, such as the military's historical development, the current characteristics of the officer corps, and the military's participation in setting foreign policy, all the articles touch on a common question: to what extent is the Mexican military subordinate to civilian control, and what evidence exists to show that this relationship may be changing? Nearly all of the essays, however, focus on the Mexican military in the post-World War II era. Only Lieuwen's essay discusses the Mexican military's historical development after the Revolution, although there is little information in this essay that is not covered more extensively in his earlier book, *Mexican Militarism*.

The latest book to cover the Mexican military in any detail is Roderic Ai Camp's *Generals in the Palacio*, an extremely well-written and thoroughly researched analysis of the Mexican military's officer corps, and specifically those officers who attained the rank of general.¹³ Drawing on over twenty years of research in which he collected biographical data on military officers, politicians, and intellectuals, Camp provides an analysis of the Mexican military's social origins, institutional values, political attitudes, and educational system. For purposes of this essay, however, it is the latter topic, Mexico's professional military educational system, which proves to be the most informative. In examining the *Heroico Colegio Militar* (Heroic Military College) and the *Escuela Superior de Guerra* (Superior War School), schools critical to Amaro's overall military education program, Camp explains the vital role they have performed in shaping

Although capably written and researched, they remain unpublished. See William S. Ackroyd, "Descendants of the Revolution: Civil-Military Relations in Mexico" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 1988); Michael J. Dziedzic, "The Essence of Decision in a Hegemonic Regime: The Case of Mexico's Acquisition of a Supersonic Fighter" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1986); and Stephen J. Wager, "The Mexican Army, 1940-1982: The Country Comes First" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1992).

¹³Roderic Ai Camp, *Generals in the Palacio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

norms of behavior, especially those that stress unquestioning deference and obedience to superiors, including civilian government officials.¹⁴ Using military publications, biographical data, and first-hand accounts from both Mexican and U.S. military officers, Camp shows how these schools take in young cadets and junior officers and over the course of several years, subject their students to a rigidly controlled socialization process that emphasizes an extreme level of subordination. Unlike the U.S. military system, where only a small percentage of officers are commissioned through military academies, the Heroico Colegio Militar serves as the common formative experience for most Mexican officers. In addition, while only a small percentage of junior officers attend the highly selective Escuela Superior de Guerra, its graduates comprise over two-thirds of those promoted to general. Thus for Camp, much of the explanation for the Mexican military's current subordination to civilian officials has its roots in an intensive military education program from which the top military leadership is drawn. Camp's discussion of Mexico's current military educational system is clear, insightful, and crucial to understanding the existing situation in which the military is largely subordinate to civilian rule. Yet Camp's findings also highlight the clear need for a closer look at the historical development of these schools under Amaro, since it was Amaro who created the military education system in order to end the culture of militarism rampant at the time.

While the works of Lieuwen and Camp contribute greatly to our knowledge of the Mexican military's depoliticization and the role professional military education played in bringing this about, they also shed light on a sub-theme within the broader literature on

¹⁴Originally known as the Colegio Militar, the word "Heroico" was added by presidential decree on December 29, 1949 in commemoration of the cadets who defended the school against U.S. troops during the Mexican-American War. See Tomás Sánchez Hernández and Miguel A. Sánchez Lamego, *Historia de una institución gloriosa: El heroico Colegio Militar, 1823-1970* (Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional: México, 1970), 181.

civil-military relations: the relationship between military professionalism and the level of political influence exercised by the armed forces. Clearly, Lieuwen and Camp believe that in Mexico's case, increased military professionalism helped depoliticize the armed forces, and thus they reinforce a theory first posed by Samuel P. Huntington.¹⁵ In *The Soldier and the State*, Huntington argues that "subjective civilian control," the more traditional approach to ensuring the military's responsiveness to civilian authority, detracts from the military's effectiveness of protecting the nation. Because its goal is to maximize the power of civilian groups in relation to the military, subjective control minimizes the power of the military by "civilianizing" it, and creates a military that mirrors the conflicting values of many civilian interest groups.¹⁶ It is far better to establish "objective civilian control," which "militarizes" the military, separates military and civilian concerns, and thus maximizes both military responsiveness and effectiveness. For Huntington, the key to objective civilian control is professionalism, which he defines in terms of expertise, responsibility, and corporateness. As professionalism increases, the complex skills required by members of the military to master their vocation will also increase, thereby consuming the overwhelming portion of their time and satisfying all their occupational needs. Thus, the interest of the armed forces is restricted purely to military concerns, causing them to become apolitical in their activities. Huntington reflects a major trend in the historical development of

¹⁵While this view is implicit in Lieuwen's *Mexican Militarism*, he draws a more explicit connection between increased levels of military professionalism and lessening political influence in his *Arms and Politics in Latin America* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1960). See especially pages 151-153. Camp's support for Huntington's theory in the case of Mexico can be found in *Generals in the Palacio*, page 11.

¹⁶Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 80-97.

professionalism in the U.S. military, and nearly every work concerning civil-military relations is influenced, positively or negatively, by his theories. However, a common criticism of Huntington's theory is that political neutrality is inherent in his definition of professionalism.¹⁷ Thus, according to Huntington's definition, professional officers could never intervene in politics, because if they did, they would no longer be professional.

In contrast to Huntington, other scholars, notably Latin Americanists, argue that professionalization has encouraged the military to assume an active and even dominant role in politics. Among Latin Americanists, one of the best-known theories on the relationship between professionalism and political influence is Alfred Stepan's theory of "new professionalism."¹⁸ In explaining the expanding political roles of the highly professionalized Brazilian and Peruvian militaries during the 1960's, Stepan argues that Huntington's theory on military professionalism has often been misapplied, as the theory assumes that the military is developing its skills for conventional warfare against an external threat. However, during the 1950s and 1960s, Stepan notes that the militaries of Brazil and Peru began to focus on subversion and internal security due to the perceived threat of a domestic revolution. Consequently, these militaries began to train their officers to acquire expertise in internal security matters that included a knowledge of all aspects of the nation's social, economic, and political matters. Thus, Stepan concludes that Huntington's definition of professionalism, which he calls "old" professionalism, is not applicable to Brazil and Peru. Rather it is the "new" professionalism, as defined by

¹⁷Bengt Abrahamsson, *Military Professionalization and Political Power* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1972), 159.

¹⁸Alfred Stepan, "The New Professionalism of Internal Warfare and Military Role Expansion" in *Authoritarian Brazil*, ed. Alfred Stepan (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976).

its mission of internal security and national development, that has caused the Brazilian and Peruvian militaries to become highly politicized.

Stepan's work is unique because it is one of the few theories that does not overtly refute Huntington's theory, but seeks to expand and modify it in the case of Brazil and Peru. In addition, many other scholars have accepted and used his theory of "new professionalism" in their works. Despite this popularity, however, several scholars have questioned its accuracy. The most critical review of Stepan's argument is an article written by John Markoff and Silvio R. Duncan Baretta, in which they question whether the Brazilian military's adoption of the "new professionalism" mission is really a new development at all.¹⁹ They point to many examples in past Brazilian history, particularly the *Estado Novo* period of 1937-1945, to illustrate the strong military presence in government prior to the 1964 coup. In conclusion, they believe that the 1960s slogan "*Segurança e Desenvolvimento*" is little more than a variation of "*Ordem e Progresso*." Another excellent article by José Murilo de Carvalho, which includes a document written in 1934 by General Góes Monteiro to President Getúlio Vargas, makes the same point.²⁰ Sounding very much like the "new professionalism" ideology of internal security and national development, the document lists a long series of economic and political measures for the military to undertake, including the promotion of national industry, regulation of economic life, and reform of the state apparatus.

¹⁹John Markoff and Silvio R. Duncan Baretta, "Professional Ideology and Military Activism in Brazil: Critique of a Thesis of Alfred Stepan," *Comparative Politics* 17 (January 1985): 175-191.

²⁰José Murilo de Carvalho, "Armed Forces and Politics in Brazil, 1930-1945," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 62 (May 1982): 193-223.

Focusing on an earlier period than Stepan, Frederick M. Nunn theorizes in his book, *Yesterday's Soldiers*, that the political interventions undertaken by the armed forces in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru were a direct result of military professionalization during the period 1890 to 1940. For Nunn, the roots of this professionalization stemmed from the French and German military missions that had been sent to these countries prior to World War I. Although the French and German militaries did not repeatedly intervene in government politics, they were nevertheless vital and significant ingredients in their respective governments' political processes. The real distinction between the armed forces of Europe and South America prior to World War II, Nunn argues, was not in professional military attitudes, but in the resistance of French and German civilian institutions to military political influence. Eventually, by 1940, military professionalism in South America would manifest itself as "professional militarism," which Nunn defines as "the propensity and willingness to apply solutions based on a military ethos to social, economic, and political problems."²¹ Nunn provides a needed historical background to civil-military relations in South America that compliments Stepan's work by explaining military involvement in government politics before World War II. It also offers a convincing counter-argument to earlier works that laud the accomplishments of the European military missions.²² For the most part, these earlier works fail to analyze the organization and attitudes of the European military missions and the effects they had in Latin America to the same degree as Nunn. Nevertheless, Latin American militaries

²¹Frederick M. Nunn, *Yesterday's Soldiers* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 2.

²²See for example, Lieuwen, *Arms and Politics in Latin America*, and Robert William Studer, "The Colombian Army: Political Aspects of Its Role" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1975).

intervened in governmental affairs long before the arrival of these military missions, yet Nunn's theory does not address this issue. All the same, in the context of the Mexican military, Nunn's most important contribution is his assertion that a key part of South America's military professionalization clearly included an ethos of "professional militarism," the very ethos that Amaro sought to eradicate.

In one of the few works that directly considers the impact of professionalization on the Mexican military, William S. Ackroyd constructs a model that notes how different levels of military professionalism will result in different forms of political influence.²³ According to the model, low or nonexistent levels of professionalism are likely to result in military coups, while high levels of professionalism will increase the probability of military participation. The nature of military participation, characterized as either military intervention/domination (MID) or civilian domination/military partnership (CDMP), is dependent upon the level of "civilian professionalization," or the competence level of civilian government officials in the performance of their duties. In the case of Mexico, the military holds the view that civilian politicians are sufficiently competent to govern relative to the military's own level of professional training and behavior. Thus, Ackroyd states that the Mexican military participates in the government as a subordinate partner of the civilian politicians, and therefore characterizes Mexican civil-military relations as CDMP. Given that the majority of the research on civil-military relations in Latin America tends to focus on South America, Ackroyd's work on Mexico clearly fills a significant gap in this area. Especially useful is Ackroyd's recognition of the importance of civilian professionalism, a factor often overlooked by those scholars who

²³William S. Ackroyd, "The Military in Mexican Politics: The Impact of Professionalism, Civilian Behavior and the Revolution," *Proceedings of the Pacific Coast Council on Latin American Studies* 12 (1986): 93-107.

focus only on the military. Unfortunately, Ackroyd does not address the historical process of Mexico's military professionalization, or how this process may have contributed to a political environment in which the military, which had once exercised a dominating role, now participates as a subordinate partner to the civilian politicians.

Summary

While Amaro's name may not be as familiar as some of the more colorful personalities of the revolutionary era, nearly all works dealing with the Mexican Revolution find it necessary to mention him to some degree. Yet, as previously noted, Amaro's significance resides not so much in his battlefield experiences, but rather in his relatively long tenure as Secretary of War (1925-1931), and as the Mexican military's first Director of Military Education (1931-1935). Consequently, during a critical ten-year period in which Mexico underwent a difficult and unpredictable transition from the military phase of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) to what scholars have since called its institutional phase (post 1940), Amaro undertook the difficult task—and by historical standards, a nearly impossible task—of transforming Mexico's military from its *de facto* role as arbiter of political policies and presidential succession to one that was largely supportive of and loyal to the government.

Key to understanding this transition then is an examination of Amaro himself, since one cannot simply assume that any Secretary of War would have had either the talent or the determination to carry out this difficult task. What were Amaro's experiences as both a lowly infantryman and as a general leading revolutionary forces into battle, and how did they shape his ideas of military reform? Which prominent

Mexican leaders influenced Amaro, and what lessons did he learn from them? What were Amaro's ideas on the proper role of the military in society, and how did these ideas develop over time? Finally, what was Amaro like as a person, and what complexities and contradictions characterized both his personal life and his professional career? While Mexicanists have aided our understanding of the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath through their examination of Villa, Zapata, Obregón, and many other important individuals, a detailed examination of Amaro's life and his role in reforming the military is sorely needed to better comprehend this crucial period in Mexico's history.

Parallel with the scarcity of works on Amaro is the lack of scholarly attention that has been paid to what is arguably one of Latin America's most fascinating institutions, the Mexican military. Yet it is precisely the phenomenon of Mexican "exceptionalism," that is, the very absence of a military coup in Mexico coupled with the lack of any overt role by the military in Mexican politics, which makes the Mexican military worthy of scholarly analysis. What historical factors explain Mexico's membership in this rather elite club of Latin American governments that have not experienced a military coup for most of the 20th century? Given that the era of the Mexican Revolution witnessed a time in which politics, especially presidential succession, were determined primarily by military force or the threat thereof, how did the Mexican military undergo such a drastic and long-lasting transformation?

While there are several methods one can use to answer the above questions, I believe that an examination of Amaro's life will prove an effective way of addressing them, since his influential tenure as Secretary of War and Director of Military Education proved key to this transformation. While this dissertation will not primarily be an

analysis of the Mexican military as an institution, clearly it is the great transformation and high degree of professionalization experienced by the Mexican military that makes Amaro's life such a fascinating and historically relevant subject of analysis.

Although a complete biography of Amaro would include a detailed examination of his career after he stepped down as Director of Military Education in 1935, this dissertation will essentially end its examination of Amaro's life precisely at this point. Amaro had a truly remarkable military career that lasted from his enlistment in 1911 until his death in 1952. After only two years in service, Amaro had achieved the rank of general, and by 1920, had attained the military's highest rank, the equivalent of a four-star general. While Amaro's personal and professional life after 1935 may be worthy of research in another context, it is not my intention to include a detailed examination of Amaro's life during this period, since his ability to continue his program of military professionalization was greatly limited after 1935.

In sum, while there is no shortage of works analyzing the Mexican Revolution's political, economic, and social effects, or its many colorful personalities, scholars have neither satisfactorily examined one of the more important generals of that era, Joaquín Amaro, nor fully analyzed the critical role he played in transforming Mexico's military. In a development virtually unparalleled among the nations of Latin America, the Mexican military underwent a profound and durable transformation in which it exchanged its status as political arbiter for one that was largely subservient to the Mexican government. Amaro's importance lay not only—or even primarily—in the structural changes he made to the military, but rather in the cultural changes he instilled within the military. Thus the importance of this dissertation is that it will provide a much more comprehensive

examination of Amaro's life than currently available, going beyond his efforts as Secretary of War in 1926, and thereby provide a more complete understanding of the Mexican military's remarkable transformation in the decades after the Revolution.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINS OF A REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL

It is unlikely that Antonio Amaro and his wife, Angela Domínguez de Amaro, spent much time pondering the question of what to name their newborn son. The Amaros lived on a small ranch named Corrales de Abrego, located near the town of Sombrete in eastern Zacatecas, and like many inhabitants in rural, late-nineteenth-century Mexico, when it came to naming children, they turned to the Catholic Church. This process was not terribly complicated, however, for the traditional practice among many Catholics in Mexico was simply to name their newborn after the saint on whose feast day the child was born. Since their son's birth fell on August 16, 1889, the recognized feast day of Saint Joaquín, the Amaros quite naturally named their first son Joaquín.¹ Apparently, the Amaros consulted the Catholic Church several more times after the birth of their first child, as young Joaquín eventually became the oldest of ten children born to them. At

¹According to Catholic tradition, Saint Joachim (or Joaquín in Spanish) was the husband of Saint Anne and the father of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Originally, the Catholic Church celebrated the feast of Saint Joachim on March 20, but his feast day was later transferred to August 16th, the day following the Feast of the Assumption of Mary. Since that time, however, the feast of Saint Joachim has been moved to July 26th, where it now coincides with the feast of Saint Anne. See *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Joachim;" and *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 4th ed., s.v. "Joachim."

Information concerning the date and location of Amaro's birth is taken from his military service record. See Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, Bóveda, Joaquín Amaro Domínguez (hereafter cited as AHSDN/JAD), Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 1, Foja 199. See also Jesús Romero Flores, *Historia de la Revolución en Michoacán* (México: Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1964), 93.

some point during his childhood, his father moved his wife and children to the nearby state of Durango, where he worked as a ranch hand on a hacienda named El Saucillo.²

Amaro's Early Childhood

Unfortunately, much of Amaro's childhood is lost to the historical record, and thus it is possible to provide only small glimpses of his early years, a period of his life that he rarely discussed.³ There appears to be some discrepancy as to whether young Joaquín ever attended school, but most likely he learned to read and write and even acquired basic accounting skills without the benefit of formal schooling.⁴ Such a scenario would, in fact, coincide well with the reputation that Amaro had as an adult: an autodidact with a passion for books. One of the most vivid memories that Amaro's daughter had of her father was of him reading portions of several books on a small wooden tray before going to bed. Similarly, his son recalled the large personal library his father had amassed and the great care he took in organizing and caring for it.⁵ General Luis Alamillo Flores, one of Amaro's most trusted officers, spoke of Amaro's

²José C Valadés, *La revolución mexicana y sus antecedentes: historia general y completa del Porfiriato a la revolución* (México, D.F.: Editorial del Valle de Mexico, 1978), 404. Valadés collected this information based on an interview with Amaro in 1939.

³Interview with Manuel Amaro, son of Joaquín Amaro, May 25, 2003. According to Manuel, when it came to talking about his life, Amaro was a "veritable mummy, deaf, blind, and mute," who "never spoke of his life, neither before, nor during, nor after the Revolution." Manuel Amaro's exact words were: ". . . verdadera momia, sordo, ciego, y mudo . . . nunca habló de su vida, ni antes, ni durante, ni después de la revolución.")

⁴In his interview with Valadés, Amaro claimed to have attended both primary and secondary school in the city of Durango. However, Dr. Martha Loyo, based partly on her interview with Amaro's youngest brother, Santos, finds little evidence to support this claim. Loyo surmised that Amaro's claim of formal education during his youth may have had more to do with his potential candidacy for the presidency than with an accurate account of his childhood. See Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*, 18.

⁵Interview with Elisa Amaro, daughter of Joaquín Amaro, March 12, 2004, and with Manuel Amaro, March 22, 2004.

exceptional memory and his amazing ability to recall names and a wide array of details with ease.⁶ Regardless of whether or not Amaro formally attended school, any education he may have had was completed by 1908, when the future general began work in the main office of the El Saucillo hacienda, where he assisted with bookkeeping duties.⁷ At first glance, the suggestion that Amaro, a fearless cavalry officer, whose battlefield exploits catapulted him to the top of his profession, first entered the workforce as a bookkeeper appears utterly out of place. But the fact remains that irrespective of any experience he may have had with formal education, Amaro was enamored with both books and organization. Thus, Amaro's brief experience as a bookkeeper at the El Saucillo ranch foreshadowed future and much larger accomplishments, which, on a national scale, would critically impact the development of the Mexican military, and, by extension, the history of Mexico itself. Yet the turbulent events associated with the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath lay far in the future. What may have been most evident to Amaro in 1908 was that with both he and his father contributing to the family's income, the Amaros enjoyed a comfortable standard of living.⁸

As a young man of nineteen, Amaro had probably achieved the general physical characteristics that appear in the pictures from his later years. By today's standards, he was not tall, perhaps less than 5' 6" in height. Early photographs show him as rather trim, and he gained weight only in his later years. His skin was dark brown, much darker than most future generals of the Mexican Revolution, and he parted his thick, black, wavy hair

⁶Luis Alamillo Flores, *Memorias: Luchadores ignorados al lado de los grandes jefes de la Revolución Mexicana* (México: Editorial Extemporáneos, S.A., 1976), 266-267.

⁷Valadés, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 404.

⁸Ibid.; and Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*, 18.

down the middle; later, as a general, he would comb it straight back. In nearly every picture that survives, he sports a mustache, although not the large, overflowing, handlebar type worn by Zapata, Villa, and most of his military contemporaries. Instead, Amaro's mustache was always neatly trimmed, neither covering his lips nor extending beyond the edges of his mouth. His face, always clean-shaven except for his mustache, was well proportioned, neither too round nor too long, while his eyes, nose, and mouth appear somewhat small. The cleft in his chin made up for his small facial features, and, overall, helped promote the image of the neatly groomed military officer that he surely sought to project.

Amaro's dark skin gave rise to the belief, common among many of his contemporaries, that he descended from the Yaqui Indians, inhabitants of the northern state of Sonora. Many years later, when the matter of his Yaqui lineage came up during an interview, Amaro responded with a hearty laugh. Rather than resolving the question, he left the matter open to conjecture by stating, "But if in my military service record it indicates my place of birth . . . [as being in Zacatecas, not Sonora]."⁹ The thrust of Amaro's statement is that since his military service record indicates his place of birth as Zacatecas, then he couldn't be a Yaqui, since Yaquis are indigenous to Sonora. Amaro's military records do state that he was born in Zacatecas, but clearly not all Yaquis were confined to Sonora. In an interview with Amaro's son, Manuel, he stated that while Amaro certainly had Indian ancestors, they were not Yaqui Indians. Manuel believed the story of his father's supposed Yaqui lineage arose from Amaro's many years of fighting

⁹"¡Pero si en mi hoja de servicios militares está señalado el lugar de mi nacimiento . . . !" Valadés, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 403.

under the command of Alvaro Obregón, who did use Yaqui troops. As a result, many simply assumed that Amaro was a Yaqui.¹⁰

A second mystery surrounding Amaro concerns a pendant earring that he allegedly wore in one ear when he served as a captain during the Revolution. Supposedly, he wore the pendant during combat in order to give him a warrior spirit and to distinguish himself from his fellow soldiers.¹¹ In the same interview, Amaro quickly dismissed this story as a legend, but nevertheless a useful one in that it gave him and his men a psychological advantage over the enemy.¹² If Amaro ever did sport an earring, he apparently never let himself be photographed wearing it, perhaps because such an image clashed with the military aura that he strove to maintain. In fact, another distinguishing characteristic of Amaro, completely in line with his well-groomed hair and trimmed mustache, involved the fact that he always appeared impeccably dressed in a crisp military uniform. Although other revolutionary soldiers apparently felt comfortable wearing two cartridge belts slung across their chests, Amaro was almost always photographed wearing a complete military uniform, neatly pressed and fully buttoned to the collar. This pose gave all around him the unmistakable feeling that they were in the presence of a true military professional.

¹⁰Interview with Manuel Amaro, May 25, 2003.

¹¹Nazario Medina Dominguez, *La Ultima Batalla* (Morelia, Michocán, 1962), 17-21.

¹²Valadés, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 403, 415-417.

Amaro Joins the Revolution

In 1908, Amaro's military career still lay in the future. At this point no one could have predicted the turmoil and suffering that nearly every family throughout Mexico would experience once the Revolution broke out. Still, even in 1908 there were signs within the Amaro family that things were not quite right. For reasons never clear, his father frequently left the family to travel to Torreón, a town in the nearby state of Coahuila.¹³ Then, in 1910, Amaro's father unexpectedly sold his modest belongings, gave the money to Amaro, and told him, "My son, I want you to go to Durango with your mother and siblings, work for Mr. Calderón [a local store-owner], learn the business, get to know the town, and when you feel able, open your own store."¹⁴ Finally, in mid-November, Amaro's father bid an emotional goodbye to his family for an alleged business trip to Torreón, leaving Amaro, now a young man of twenty-one, to care for his mother and nine siblings. It was the last time Amaro would ever see his father.

Amaro eventually learned of his father's whereabouts from an article in a Torreón newspaper, in which the elder Amaro was listed as one of several volunteers who had joined the revolutionary army of Colonel Luis Moya. While Amaro followed the exploits of his father's unit in the local newspapers, he continued to work and care for the family, eventually leaving his employment with Mr. Calderón to set up his own store.¹⁵ We may never know exactly what caused Amaro to leave his mother and younger siblings to join the fight against Díaz, but it seems logical that he sought to emulate his father's actions

¹³Ibid., 404.

¹⁴"Quiero, hijito, que se vaya a Durango con su mamacita y sus hermanos; trabaja con el señor Calderón, aprende el comercio, conoce la plaza, y cuando ya se sienta con capacidad, instala su tiendita." Ibid., 405.

¹⁵Ibid., 405-406.

as a revolutionary. He may have even thought of fighting alongside his father.¹⁶ It must have been heartbreaking when Amaro learned that his father had been killed fighting Díaz's Federal Army in Zacatecas, yet the news of his father's death may have also hardened his determination to remain a revolutionary and avenge this action. Regardless of his reasoning, Amaro took his first step towards a life-long military career on February 28, 1911, when he enlisted as a private in the revolutionary army of General Domingo Arrieta, then operating in Durango.¹⁷ Looking back on those years, Amaro recalled, "Nearly all of us were very young. Most were noble, strong, full of life, sincere, and supporters of Madero with all our heart."¹⁸

Amaro spent just under ten months with Arrieta, and while his military service record shows few campaigns during this period, Amaro clearly impressed Arrieta by displaying an aptitude for increased responsibility. After spending his first five months of military service as a private, he was promoted every month from August through December, eventually achieving the rank of lieutenant.¹⁹ Events at the national level now intervened to alter Amaro's military career when Colonel Gertrudis G. Sánchez, under

¹⁶Both Valadés and Loyo cite the death of Amaro's father as a motive for Amaro's enlistment as a revolutionary, but Amaro's military service record shows that he enlisted as a revolutionary on February 28, 1911, shortly before Amaro's father was reported to have died in battle sometime between March 15 and 17 of that same year. See Valadés, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 406-407; and Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*, 20. For details on the death of Antonio Amaro, see Miguel A. Sánchez Lamego, *Generales de la Revolución*, vol. II (México: Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1981), 136.

¹⁷AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 1, Foja 199.

¹⁸"Casi todos éramos jovencitos; los más eran altos, fornidos, llenos de vida, sincerotes y maderistas de todo corazón." Valadés, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 408.

¹⁹Hoja de Servicios, 1927, Archivo Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca – Archivo Joaquín Amaro (in process of being cataloged and hereafter cited as ACT-AJA), Archivo Familiar, General Joaquín Amaro. The exact dates of Amaro's promotions are as follows: Corporal – August 1, 1911; Sergeant (Second Class) – September 1, 1911; Sergeant (First Class) – October 4, 1911; Second Lieutenant – November 3, 1911; Lieutenant – December 12, 1911.

orders from Mexico's new president, Francisco I. Madero, incorporated part of Arrieta's forces into the 28th Rural Corps, which Sánchez himself commanded.²⁰ Amaro and the rest of the 28th Rural Corps were extremely busy during the first four months of 1912, as they crisscrossed nearly the entire state of Morelos battling *zapatistas* (followers of leader Emiliano Zapata) in at least nineteen separate engagements.²¹ Amaro described his first encounter with *zapatistas* at the battle of El Trienta as his "baptism in blood," a furious gun battle lasting some twelve hours; at a later engagement, known as the battle of Jojutla de Juárez, Amaro's actions were sufficiently heroic to earn him the "Cruz de Segunda Clase."²² As Amaro continued to battle *zapatistas* under General Jesús H. Salgado during the remainder of 1912, and then the Federal forces of Victoriano Huerta during 1913 and 1914, he also continued his rapid rise through the ranks. In November 1913 he earned the position of second-in-command and in October 1914 he reached the rank of *general de brigada*.²³

Amaro as Warrior and Legend

It was during these years of fighting under Sánchez that Amaro purportedly donned his pendant earring, allegedly declaring to his men that he would never take it off

²⁰Antonio Uroz, *Hombres de la Revolución* (México: Editorial Lic. Antonio Uroz, 1971), 129; and Romero Flores, *Historia de la Revolución en Michoacán*, 65-66.

²¹AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 1, Foja 199-201.

²²"¡Qué balacera! Combatimos con furor, como los hombres; los *zapatistas* llegaban hasta nuestros carros; peleamos desde las ocho de la mañana hasta las ocho de la noche . . . ¡Fue mi bautizo de sangre! . . ." Valadés, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 409. Amaro's award is documented in his 1918 military service record, AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 1, Foja 200.

²³AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 1, Foja 199-201. The general officer ranks in the Mexican military are *general brigadier* (one-star general), *general de brigada* (two-star general), and *general de división* (three-star general and the highest rank an officer could achieve).

until they were victorious in bringing the Revolution to Mexico City. According to legend, Amaro, mounted on horseback, would lead his men into battle by hurling his forces directly at the enemy to the sound of his own battle cry: “Here is the man of the pendant earring! Here is the Indian!”²⁴ The legend of Amaro’s pendant earring fit easily with the celebrated manner in which he reportedly fought his enemies, a manner that supposedly emulated the “Yaqui” style of fighting in which the soldier would use his horse as a shield while firing between the horse’s legs at the enemy.²⁵ While it is impossible to define exactly where the battlefield experiences of the young Amaro begin to meld into the larger-than-life tales of the legendary Amaro, his reputation as a brave, relentless battlefield commander who was not afraid to confront his enemies head-on was generally well accepted. As a panel of officers reviewing Amaro’s service record put it, “. . . General Amaro is one of the Army’s most active and energetic members, and one of its best organizers, as demonstrated by the military campaigns and forces that have been under his command.”²⁶

Amaro once sought to provide insight into the matter of his legendary warrior image, stating that most of the legends told about him began circulating after a particularly brave charge he made. But, he mused, this charge had taken place only because he had misunderstood the orders of his commanding officer. In what would be the first of many battles for control of Michoacán between Sánchez’s 28th Rural Corps

²⁴The exact quotes used by Valadés were: “aquí está el hombre de la arracada,” “aquí está el indio.” See Valadés, *La Revolución Mexicana y sus Antecedentes*, 421, 423, 439.

²⁵ Ibid., 414-415.

²⁶“Se acredita igualmente que el General Amaro es uno de los elementos más activos, enérgicos y organizadores del Ejército, demostrado todo por sus campañas y acciones de guerra y los contingentes de fuerza que han estado a su mando.” Military review panel letter dated December 16, 1922, AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 3, Fojas 605-607.

and forces loyal to Huerta, Sánchez ordered Amaro to launch an attack “through the center” of the enemy lines surrounding the plaza of Tacámbaro.²⁷ Amaro, however, mistakenly understood Sánchez to mean that he should attack the center of the town, or the plaza itself, a much more dangerous mission. As dawn broke on the morning of April 16, 1913, Amaro unleashed a violent assault through the center of the enemy lines, routing his adversaries as he swept by, just as Sánchez had ordered. Then, instead of halting his attack after he had broken through the lines, Amaro continued the charge until his men reached the plaza, whereupon the *huertistas* (followers of Victoriano Huerta), including the commanding officers, all fled in panic. In fact, the huertista officers scattered in such terror before Amaro’s audacious charge that many of them fled on foot, leaving their riderless horses frantically running through the streets of the plaza.²⁸ It was soon after the battle of Tacámbaro that Amaro’s battlefield heroics adopted their mythical quality—he became the “fearless Indian of the pendant earring” who led ruthless cavalry charges. Amaro did little to discourage these legends.²⁹

Ironically, the same qualities of audacity and physical courage that Amaro displayed on the battlefield, qualities for which he became greatly admired and which accelerated his rapid promotion to general, often caused him trouble. During peacetime, such actions were no longer seen as audacious but as ruthless. Nemesio García Naranjo, the well-known journalist and one-time Secretary of Education during the Huerta regime, wrote in 1930 that Amaro was said to be a “violent man” who was known to use his

²⁷Valadés, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 413-414.

²⁸ Romero Flores, *Historia de la Revolución en Michoacán*, 70-72; and Verónica Oikión Solano, *El constitucionalismo en Michoacán. El periodo de los gobiernos militares, 1914-1917* (México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1992), 134-137.

²⁹Valadés, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 414-416.

riding crop as a common means for disciplining officers. “There are colonels who carry the mark of his whippings,” wrote García Naranjo.³⁰ In his memoirs, Alamillo Flores wrote that during his first day of guard duty in the Secretary of War office, he was warned by the departing officers to be “very careful” as Amaro was in a especially bad mood, and that “In addition, *mi general* [Amaro] knows how to whip.”³¹ Finally, Carleton Beals, the prolific writer and journalist who had the chance to observe Amaro in person, reported in 1930:

The day after the last Independence Day parade, I saw Amaro, at the Balbuena Aviation Field, put several generals on the mat for certain remissnesses the previous morning. Those generals were men accustomed to rule, to kill, to fight, to work their will unhampered, but Amaro cursed them out like flunkies. . . Fantastic tales are told of Amaro’s cruelty; but unless he is angered or suspicious, his eyes are almost mild Formerly he had a violent temper, and it has been said he has struck cabinet members and generals across the face with his riding crop when they have affronted him.³²

One last anecdote concerning Amaro’s penchant for using a riding crop as a disciplinary tool corroborates what Nemesio García, Alamillo Flores, and Beals have written. It also illustrates the seemingly mild infractions that warranted its use, as well as the people whom Amaro was willing to “discipline.” In his memoirs, General Roberto Cruz, who served with distinction under Amaro during the de la Huerta rebellion of 1923–1924 and who always considered him a close personal friend, wrote that during his

³⁰“Se dice que Amaro es hombre violento. La violencia lo lleva con frecuencia a imperdonables extravíos, el peor de los cuales es castigar con el fuste a sus inferiores. Hay coroneles que llevan la marca de sus latigazos.” “El Poder de Amaro,” Nemesio García Naranjo, *Hispano-America* (San Francisco, California), January 14, 1930, located in ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 3, Documentos Relativos al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina.

³¹“ . . . mucho cuidado, el general viene de muy mal humor . . . ” “Y, además, mi general sabe como fustear.” Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 266.

³²Carleton Beals, “The Indian Who Sways Mexico’s Destiny,” *The New York Times*, December 7, 1930.

capacity as inspector general of the police, he needed to meet with Amaro, then serving as Secretary of War, on official business. Evidently, it was well known that any service member who met with Amaro concerning official military matters had to report to his office in full uniform. Cruz, however, no longer considered himself an active member of the army, and he did not consider the purpose of his visit an official military matter. For this reason, Cruz walked into Amaro's office out of uniform, wearing instead what he described as his normal *charro* outfit. At some point during the meeting, Cruz realized that Amaro was treating him rudely and had not yet offered him a seat. As Amaro rose from his chair, Cruz carefully noted that the Secretary of War had grasped the riding crop lying on his desk. Sensing what was about to happen, Cruz took two steps back, gripped the handle of his pistol hanging at his side, and said, "Be very careful, general, it's dangerous." "He certainly understood my words, which meant, 'If you hit me with your riding crop, I'll kill you,' and I would have done it," Cruz recounted. Perhaps recognizing the seriousness of the situation, as well as the decided disadvantage a riding crop held against a pistol, Amaro set down his "disciplinary tool" and stated, "Pardon me, *mi general*, it was a very grave error on my part." With the tense and potentially deadly moment now over, the two generals embraced and renewed their long-standing friendship.³³ Aside from being an entertaining anecdote, Cruz's story illustrates that Amaro was quick to anger and quite willing to use his riding crop even for minor infractions such as reporting out of uniform. Even more telling was the fact that Cruz was a much taller and more physically imposing man than the short and slightly-built

³³“‘Mucho cuidado general, es peligroso.’ Él comprendió seguramente mi frase, que significaba: ‘Si tú me das un fuetazo yo te mato’; y lo hubiera hecho. Él seguramente se dio cuenta de la situación, pues dejó el fute diciéndome: ‘Dispénsame mi general, ha sido un gravísimo error de mi parte.’” Roberto Cruz, *Roberto Cruz en la Revolución mexicana* (México: Editorial Diana, 1976), 131-133.

Amaro. Furthermore, Amaro didn't think twice about striking close personal friends, including fellow generals of the same rank, who had served under his command in battle.³⁴

While Amaro's fondness for the riding crop was a matter of common knowledge in military circles, and even the subject of humorous anecdotes, less well known was an incident in which Amaro's short temper led to actions that, if true, certainly went beyond the bounds of acceptable behavior. To put the incident in context, one should realize that Amaro was an exceptionally skilled horseman and an avid polo player who eventually acquired a large stable of elegant and expensive horses.³⁵ In October 1925, shortly after Amaro assumed command as Secretary of War, the U.S. military attaché in Mexico submitted the following brief but sober report:

A prominent auto dealer who plays polo with the Secretary of War stated . . . that General Amaro (Secretary of War and Marine) had shot and killed a groom in charge of said general's ponies for disobedience of orders, consisting in riding a pony to the stables, instead of leading it, as ordered.³⁶

The above report was seemingly not the first time that Amaro had been accused of shooting one of his subordinates, as can be seen from a story that Amaro related in a 1939 interview. On June 24, 1913, Amaro led his forces on a successful assault on the town of

³⁴Both Amaro and Cruz held the same rank of *general de división* when the incident occurred.

³⁵Francisco Naranjo, "Los Millonarios de la Revolución," *Diario de Yucatán*, August 1, 1948.

³⁶Major E.L.N. Glass, Military Attaché, Mexico City, National Archives, Washington (hereafter cited as NAW) Record Group 59 (RG 59), Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929 (M274), 812.002/191, 21 Oct 1925. Assuming the attaché's report was accurate, the Mexican government evidently concealed the incident, as no disciplinary action against Amaro for such an incident was ever taken. Neither the U.S. ambassador nor the military attaché appeared to doubt the veracity of the story, despite the fact that it was not reported in the local press.

Uruapan in the state of Michoacán, occupying it that same day.³⁷ At some point after his forces took control of the town, word reached him that one of his officers was stealing from a local merchant. Incensed, Amaro immediately left his headquarters and headed for the main plaza, now surrounded by a large crowd. Making his way through the restless mob, Amaro found the officer in front of the store and observed that the door and the store window had been shattered to pieces. Apparently at the invitation of the officer, the crowd itself had participated in the looting. Furious, Amaro turned to the crowd and sternly warned them that “the Revolution had not taken place so people could rob, but rather, for the good of the nation, and so, everyone should head back to their homes.”³⁸ Amaro then confronted the guilty officer and severely reprimanded him for disobeying orders. Evidently the officer did not appreciate Amaro’s reprimand, for he quickly pointed his rifle towards him and chambered a round. Instantly, one of Amaro’s men drew his pistol and shot the officer dead. This incident, insisted Amaro, gave rise to the distorted legend of how he had once killed one of his own officers, thus furthering his reputation as the “fierce Indian with the pendant earring.”³⁹

Amaro Breaks with Sánchez

With the fall of the Huerta regime in August 1914, the real struggle for control of Mexico at the national level began, as the previously united revolutionary forces now battled each other for the right to fill the vacuum left by Huerta. Prior to Huerta’s

³⁷Oikión Solano, *El constitucionalismo en Michoacán*, 145.

³⁸“ . . . la revolución no había sido hecha para robar, sino para hacer un bien al país y que, por tanto, toda la gente debería marchar a sus casas.” Valadés, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 417.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 417-418.

departure, powerful revolutionary generals such as Obregón, Villa, Zapata, plus numerous others, found it advantageous to curb their personal rivalries in order to combat the main threat posed by Huerta's counter-revolution. Now, with Huerta gone these same generals had to make a crucial decision as to which revolutionary faction they would support. Sánchez, Amaro, and many others who had spent the past 18 months successfully battling huertistas for control of Michoacán, faced this same crucial decision. As events unfolded in 1914, it soon became clear that the revolutionary generals had only two logical choices: Venustiano Carranza's Constitutional Army, backed by Obregón's military might, or the Conventionalist forces, headed by Eulalio Gutiérrez and backed by the powerful armies of Villa and Zapata.⁴⁰ As historian Alan Knight points out in his comprehensive study of the Mexican Revolution, while it was not easy for revolutionary leaders to maintain a neutral position, it was no simple matter to choose between two ideologically diverse factions.⁴¹ In truth, neither the Conventionalist military coalition, increasingly dominated by Villa, nor the forces allied with Carranza were based on clear class or ideological identification; rather, they were constructed chiefly according to local, personal, *ad hoc* rivalries that defied predictable patterns. True, for some individuals the choice may have been rather clear, as in the amusing example of Carranza's chauffeur, who "had to join Villa because he stole Carranza's automobile and all spare tires when Carranza left Mexico City."⁴² For

⁴⁰For a useful overview of the Mexican Revolution during this period, see Robert E. Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution, 1914-1915* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962).

⁴¹Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 276, 285.

⁴²H.L. Beach, San Antonio, Texas, NAW, RG 59, M274, 812.00/15335, June 30, 1915, cited in *Ibid.*, 276.

Sánchez and his generals, however, the decision was decidedly more difficult, and the potential consequences much more serious.

Since at least from the period of the Madero presidency, relations between Carranza and Sánchez had been rather strained, for Sánchez had supported Carranza's rival for the gubernatorial position in the state of Coahuila.⁴³ The relations between the two did not improve after the defeat of the huertistas in August 1914, for Carranza had refused to ratify Sánchez's self-awarded rank of *general de división*, authorizing instead the lower rank of *general de brigada*.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, at the end of September 1914, after consulting with Amaro and his other generals, Sánchez decided to throw his allegiance to Carranza and the Constitutionalist Army.⁴⁵ Perhaps Sánchez still nursed resentment over Carranza's refusal to award him the rank of *general de división*, or perhaps Sánchez believed, as many did at that time, that Villa was destined to rule Mexico. Regardless of the reason, by early November, Sánchez abruptly switched loyalties and formally announced his allegiance to Gutiérrez and the Conventionalist government. Later that month, he made friendly overtures towards Villa and his army when they passed through the city of Irapuato in the neighboring state of Guanajuato.⁴⁶ At this time, Sánchez and his forces were in need of ammunition and money. Thus, on November 19, Sánchez gathered his top generals, including Amaro, to call on Villa and request his help. After expressing his loyalty to the Conventionalist cause, Sánchez then made, in Villa's words,

⁴³Uroz, *Hombres de la Revolución*, 150; and José Bravo Ugarte, *Historia sucinta de Michoacán. Estado y Departamento (1821-1962)*, vol. III (México: Editorial Jus, S.A., 1964), 204.

⁴⁴Sánchez Lamago, *Generales de la Revolución*, 171, 175.

⁴⁵Oikión Solano, *El constitucionalismo en Michoacán*, 266.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 267-268.

“enormous requests for arms and money.”⁴⁷ Unfortunately for Sánchez, Villa doubted his sincerity and thought little of his fighting abilities; thus he balked at granting Sánchez’s request.⁴⁸ An argument ensued, and Villa promptly ordered that Sánchez, Amaro, and the others be shot. One can imagine what went through Amaro’s mind as Sánchez quickly worked to persuade Villa to release him and his men, and while Sánchez was ultimately successful in securing their freedom, this incident clearly ended any cooperation between the two forces.⁴⁹

One reason that Villa remained reluctant to provide Sánchez with arms lay with his fear that *carrancista* General Francisco Murguía located in the nearby state of Mexico, cut off from his base of supply and doggedly pursued by zapatistas, would escape through Michoacán, defeat Sánchez and capture his weaponry.⁵⁰ Villa’s fear was not unfounded, for a mere five days after Sánchez’s near fateful meeting with Villa, Murguía broke camp and marched his army through Michoacán to join General Manuel

⁴⁷Martín Luis Guzmán, *Memoirs of Pancho Villa*, translated by Virginia H. Taylor (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 373. Guzmán, who served with Villa and had access to his papers, also relied on his own recollections and those of Villa’s followers when writing *Memoirs of Pancho Villa*. Furthermore, Guzmán openly admits his partisan desire “to make a more eloquent defense of Villa in the face of the iniquity with which the Mexican Counter-Revolution and its allies have unburdened themselves of their sins by setting him up as a target.” Therefore, while not all of the words Guzmán ascribed to Villa in *Memoirs of Pancho Villa* can be considered actual quotes from Villa himself, Guzmán’s work is instructive for illustrating the deep distrust that existed between Sánchez and Villa.

⁴⁸As Villa purportedly stated in his memoirs, “They [Sánchez and his men] were saying that they supported the government of the Convention, but I doubted their sincerity and had little opinion of their abilities, for I knew of no great battles Gertrudis Sánchez had fought or just how he had contributed to destroying Huerta’s armies.” Ibid.

⁴⁹Romero Flores, *Historia de la Revolución en Michoacán*, 141. Romero Flores was among the group that accompanied Sánchez for the nearly fateful meeting with Villa. In his memoirs, Villa recounted the meeting with Sánchez and his staff, and while he admitted to holding them prisoner for a short while, he made no mention of ordering their execution. See Guzmán, *Memoirs of Pancho Villa*, 373-374. In the end, Sánchez did receive a large quantity of arms, ammunition, and money from Villa, which ironically, would be used against him during the second battle of Celaya. See Píndaro Urióstegui Miranda, *Testimonios del Proceso Revolucionario de Méxcio* (México: Talleres de ARGIN, 1970), 113.

⁵⁰Guzmán, *Memoirs of Pancho Villa*, 374; and Leopoldo Zúñiga Tercero, “La verdad sobre los discutidos combates del ‘Cerro de las Vueltas’,” Parts I and II, *El Legionario* XIII, no. 130 (December 20, 1961): 26. A *carrancista* denoted those revolutionaries who expressed loyalty to Venustiano Carranza.

M. Diéguez's forces in Jalisco. Although Sánchez had publicly denounced Villa, he still considered himself a *convencionista* (an adherent to the Conventionalist cause); thus, as Murguía's forces approached Sánchez's headquarters in Morelia, both sides anticipated a battle. At the same time, however, both Murguía and Sánchez were under pressure from their immediate subordinates, including Amaro, to come to an agreement that would prevent an all-out conflict.⁵¹ Representatives from both sides met on two separate occasions but failed to come to any agreement. Finally on December 15, Murguía, continuing his march towards Morelia, encountered Sánchez and the rest of his staff on board a train at Hacienda La Goleta.⁵² The two leaders and their respective staffs met aboard one of the cars, but the meeting proved tense, and both sides exchanged heated words. Eventually, Sánchez agreed to denounce the Conventionalists and align with the Constitutionalist Army, yet he doggedly refused to recognize Carranza's authority as "*Jefe de la Revolución*." Growing impatient, Murguía made it known that he was through discussing the matter, stating, "We've already wasted a lot of time, within half an hour I will advance on Morelia."⁵³ It was at this moment that Amaro, silent up till then, first spoke. "*Mi General*," Amaro said as he turned to Sánchez, "these men [referring to Murguía and his staff] are right; we must define ourselves; I, apparently, out of obedience to you, have been a *convencionista*; but deep down I sympathize with the Constitutionalist cause."⁵⁴ Amaro's words proved decisive. As other members of

⁵¹Oikión Solano, *El constitucionalismo en Michoacán*, 271-272.

⁵²Juan Barragán Rodríguez, *Historia del ejército y de la revolución constitucionalista*, vol. 2 (México: Talleres de la Editorial Stylo, 1946), 183-184.

⁵³"Ya hemos perdido mucho tiempo, dentro de media hora avanzo sobre Morelia . . ." Ibid., 184.

⁵⁴"Mi General, los señores tienen razón; debemos definirnos; yo, aparentemente, por obedecer a usted, he sido *convencionista*; pero en el fondo simpatizo con la causa constitucionalista . . ." Ibid.

Sánchez's staff echoed Amaro's sentiments, Sánchez signed a treaty in which he disavowed Gutiérrez as president of Mexico, renounced the legitimacy of the Conventionalist government, and agreed to unite his forces with the Constitutionalists.⁵⁵

However, as so often happened during the Revolution, treaties professing peace ended in war. Quite appropriately, Obregón once stated, "It's the case that in this country, if Cain doesn't kill Abel, then Abel kills Cain."⁵⁶ In this case, it was Sánchez who attempted to kill Murguía, or more specifically, it was Amaro, acting under orders from Sánchez, who attacked one of Murguía's rear columns as they marched through Michoacán on their way to Jalisco, a mere two weeks after Sánchez and Murguía had agreed to unite with the Constitutionalists. Other than the likelihood that Sánchez was simply being insincere when he signed the treaty, the exact reasoning behind Sánchez's attack so soon after signing the treaty remains unclear. However, the fact that Sánchez ordered Amaro to launch the attack indicates that he might have been testing with whom Amaro's ultimate loyalties lay, particularly in light of Amaro's comment during the meeting that he sympathized with the Constitutionalist cause. Regardless of the exact reason, the battle took place on a hill approximately 22 miles outside of Uruapan known as "Cerro de las Vueltas," so named for its many twisting roads and dangerous narrow paths. As the enemy column tediously made its way through the winding roads, Amaro maneuvered his 2000-man army until he surrounded the hapless column of approximately

⁵⁵Leopoldo Zíncúnegui Tercero, "La verdad sobre los discutidos combates del 'Cerro de las Vueltas'," Parts III and IV, *El Legionario* XII, no. 131 (February 28, 1962): 96. Amaro also signed his name to the treaty, as did several other generals serving under Sánchez. One can assume that by formally agreeing to join his forces with the Constitutionalists, Sánchez acquiesced to recognizing Carranza as "*Jefe de la Revolución*."

⁵⁶"... es que en este país, si Caín no mata a Abel entonces Abel mata a Caín..." José Vasconcelos, *El desastre: Tercera parte de Ulises Criollo*, 5th ed. (México, D.F.: Ediciones Botas, 1951), 278.

500 men. Launching his attack in the early morning of December 29, Amaro caught Murguía's forces by surprise. From the east Amaro's forces rained bullets on Murguía's column, while another contingent seized the high ground and battered the trapped column from the west. Amaro characteristically led the main attack directly into the enemy's front lines, even as his men moved to cut off the shattered column's retreat to the south. Seeing their only escape route blocked, a terrifying panic seized Murguía's men, and a general rout ensued as each man fled for his life.⁵⁷

Tactically speaking, the attack proved a great success; Amaro's forces crushed Murguía's column and in the ensuing rout inflicted many casualties and captured several pieces of artillery.⁵⁸ In strategic terms, however, Amaro's assault failed on several levels. First, while Amaro devastated Murguía's column, he in no way hindered Murguía's overall ability to strike back with other forces at his command. Only two days later, and in a complete reversal of the first battle, it was Amaro who was caught off guard at Cerro de las Vueltas. While engaged in furious combat, Amaro fired off a desperate message to General Anastasio Pantoja: ". . . we've been fighting for four hours . . . the enemy fire is very strong, it seems I will not triumph; send reinforcements . . .".⁵⁹ Help from Pantoja never arrived, and Murguía's forces, commanded by General Enrique Estrada, ravaged Amaro's troops, leaving many dead and wounded on the battlefield. Most importantly,

⁵⁷Leopoldo Zíncúnegui Tercero, "La verdad sobre los discutidos combates del 'Cerro de las Vueltas'," Parts V and VI, *El Legionario* XII, no. 133 (March 31, 1962): 67-68.

⁵⁸Alfonso Taracena, *La Verdadera Revolución Mexicana (1912-1914)*, 2nd ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1991), 485.

⁵⁹"... tengo cuatro horas de combate . . . el fuego es muy fuerte, parece que no los venzo; sirvase mandarme refuerzos . . ." Alberto Oviedo Mota, *El trágico fin del General Gertrudis G. Sánchez. Dos capítulos de las memorias del coronel, médico cirujano, primera y segunda partes* (Morelia: Editorial Revolucionaria, 1939), 13-14. In the same message, Amaro also pleaded that food be sent, since his men had not eaten in the past two days. *Ibid.*, 19.

Estrada regained control of the artillery that had been lost in the first attack.⁶⁰ The events at Cerro de las Vueltas also proved a failure for Amaro on a personal level. Not only did Murguía deal Amaro a humiliating military defeat, but the treacherous nature of Amaro's initial attack nearly ended his military career. Understandably, Murguía was furious with Amaro. Several months later Murguía would make a concerted effort to end Amaro's military career by charging him with treason, a charge that he barely escaped.⁶¹

Sánchez's surprise attack on Murguía just days after the two had signed a treaty failed on yet another level. It left Sánchez isolated both militarily and politically and led to deep divisions between Sánchez and the generals under his command. The most serious division occurred between Sánchez and Amaro, for when Amaro brought his battered army back to Morelia, Sánchez severely chastised him. This opened a rift between the two that would never completely close.⁶² In actuality, Sánchez's political and military isolation and his rift with Amaro were related, for the former's failure to maintain a credible commitment to either Carranza or Villa not only left him without a clear base of support at the national level, it also did little to instill among Amaro and the other generals a sense of confidence in their commander. Even more than the disastrous attack at Cerro de las Vueltas, Sánchez's wavering pronouncements, both for and against Villa, the Conventionalists, and Carranza, must have caused Amaro to seriously rethink the future viability of a military career under Sánchez's command. To make matters worse, on January 22, 1915, Sánchez once again publicly proclaimed his latest political

⁶⁰Ibid., 14-16, 19-20.

⁶¹Barragán Rodríguez, *Historia del ejército*, vol. 2, 386-387. Murguía's attempt to charge Amaro with treason is treated in more detail in the following chapter.

⁶²Oikión Solano, *El constitucionalismo en Michoacán*, 275.

position, this time denouncing both Villa and Zapata, and professing anew his loyalty to Gutiérrez as the rightful head of the Conventionalist government. Sánchez's latest public pronouncement in support of Gutiérrez proved an incredibly irrational decision. Not only did he cut himself off from both Carranza and Villa, he also bet his future on Gutiérrez, the only one among the three men who clearly had no power base of his own and who just the week before had fled from Mexico City in fear of his life.⁶³ In sum, Sánchez's alignment with Villa, an unpopular move within his own ranks and one that ultimately afforded him little advantage, his subsequent attack on the carrancista army of General Murguía, a move that left him without any allies, and his inexplicable alliance with Gutiérrez, who was himself completely powerless, made it almost inevitable that Amaro would eventually break with his commanding general and long-time friend.

If Amaro thought that his break with Sánchez was all but unavoidable, it would nonetheless be emotionally difficult for the two actually to part ways. For three years Amaro had served under Sánchez's command with distinction, rising from lieutenant to *general de brigada* and achieving the coveted position of second-in-command. In fact, Amaro's position as Sánchez's "*dedo chiquito*" or right-hand man came to be a source of friction between him and his peers, as Sánchez consistently outfitted Amaro's brigade with the best arms, ammunition, animals, and other military equipment.⁶⁴ It is logical to assume that throughout these years, Sánchez had instructed Amaro in the art of war as he understood it, and that Amaro's perception of generalship was greatly influenced by his campaign experiences with Sánchez. Yet it may have been Sánchez's indecisiveness and

⁶³Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution*, 166-168.

⁶⁴Leopoldo Zíncúnegui Tercero, "La verdad sobre los discutidos combates del 'Cerro de las Vueltas'," Parts III and IV, *El Legionario*, 97.

eventual isolation that had the most lasting impact on Amaro. Amaro surely took careful note as Sánchez wavered back and forth between supporting Carranza, then Villa, and then Carranza again, before ultimately backing Gutiérrez. Amaro's advice to Sánchez in the train car that "we must define ourselves" is a clear indication that he recognized the danger inherent in Sánchez's indecisiveness. Amaro undoubtedly concluded that Sánchez's inability to choose his allies wisely and make a firm commitment ultimately left him politically and militarily isolated. In the end, Amaro learned that given the chaotic and violent nature of the times, it was not enough for a revolutionary general to be physically courageous and militarily adept in battle. In order to survive and prove successful, a general would have to choose his allies carefully, selecting those with political and military might, and then making a firm commitment to remain loyal and steadfast in supporting their cause.

The actual break between Sánchez and Amaro was not abrupt, but gradual, and in many ways it reflected Amaro's desire that any separation between the two might still be avoided. In late January and February 1915, Sánchez remained in Michoacán while Amaro moved his forces to the nearby state of Mexico, where he battled *villistas* (followers of leader Francisco "Pancho" Villa) at Tultenango and El Oro.⁶⁵ In the meantime, Villa's forces marched into Michoacán, forcing Sánchez and his army to flee south to Tacámbaro. Amaro then crossed back into Michoacán, arriving at Tacámbaro on March 22, where he would meet with Sánchez one last time.⁶⁶ If Sánchez entertained thoughts that Amaro had returned to fight beside his commanding officer, he was greatly

⁶⁵AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 1, Foja 201.

⁶⁶Oikión Solano, *El constitucionalismo en Michoacán*, 283; and Oviedo Mota, *El trágico fin del General Gertrudis G. Sánchez*, 15-16.

mistaken, for Amaro had already contacted Obregón weeks earlier and pledged his adherence to Carranza and the Constitutionalist Army.⁶⁷ In truth, Amaro only returned to Michoacán in an attempt to persuade Sánchez to unite with the Constitutionalist Army and salvage what remained of his military career.⁶⁸ Sánchez evidently rebuffed Amaro's suggestion to unite with Carranza. He may have even doubted Amaro's commitment to the Constitutionalist cause for on March 27, Sánchez offered to step down temporarily as governor and *jefe militar* of Michoacán and designate Amaro as his replacement. In the interim, Sánchez planned to recuperate from wounds suffered in a recent battle with villistas. Amaro declined the offer and instead suggested that a contingent of his own men escort Sánchez to the U.S. where he could rest and recover his health. Sánchez, both surprised and angry at Amaro's refusal to serve as governor, now suspected his motives for offering an escort. It was clear that neither Sánchez nor Amaro was willing to compromise his position, and what began as a cordial reunion between two old friends quickly deteriorated. Rather than accept Amaro's offer of an escort, Sánchez departed with a small contingent of loyal supporters, a shadow of the immense following he once enjoyed.⁶⁹ Amaro's break with Sánchez was now complete; that very day, Amaro received orders from Obregón that he was to take command of the 5th Division of the Army of the Northeast.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Barragán Rodríguez, *Historia del ejército*, vol. 2, 229.

⁶⁸Alfonso Taracena, *La Verdadera Revolución Mexicana (1915-1917)*, 2nd ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1992), 60.

⁶⁹Medina Dominguez, *La Ultima Batalla*, 51-52; and Oviedo Mota, *El trágico fin del General Gertrudis G. Sánchez*, 34-36.

⁷⁰Medina Dominguez, *La Ultima Batalla*, 52; and AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 1, Foja 199.

The End of Sánchez and the Rise of Amaro

Given Sánchez's precarious political position, plus the near unanimous defection of his entire army, it became evident that the once-powerful leader of the revolutionary movement in Michoacán was nearing the end of his military career. Unfortunately, military careers during the Mexican Revolution frequently ended as a direct consequence of the officer's death, not his retirement; such would be the case with Sánchez as well. By now, Sánchez's wounds had become infected, and he sought medical aid and a much needed rest in the town of Zirándaro, currently under the control of General José Rentería Luviano, a villista who only the previous year had fought under Sánchez's command. Rentería Luviano was in no way sympathetic to Sánchez's cause, as he was one of the few generals who had refused to sign the treaty with Murguía, but he did allow Sánchez safe passage. Sánchez was now so ill that he had to be carried on a stretcher, but as he made plans to flee the country, his lack of political and military allies, as well as the defection of his generals, finally caught up with him. As Sánchez and his small contingent of supporters made their way to the coast where they planned to board a ship, they were intercepted and imprisoned by General Alejo Mastache. Mastache had also served under Sánchez and had since become a villista, but unlike Rentería Luviano, Mastache treated him as an enemy.⁷¹ Eight days later, Sánchez was shot and killed.⁷²

⁷¹Oikión Solano, *El constitucionalismo en Michoacán*, 286-289.

⁷²There is some discrepancy as to whether it was Mastache or Rentería Luviano who was ultimately responsible for ordering Sánchez's execution. Many contemporaries, including Amaro, assigned ultimate responsibility to Rentería Luviano, while others assigned primary blame to Mastache. It is safe to conclude, however, that both generals were involved in the execution. See Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, Fondo Revolución (hereafter cited as AHSDN/FR), Expediente XI/481.5/118, Caja 71, Guanajuato, Foja 85; and Barragán Rodríguez, *Historia del ejército*, vol. 2, 384-385. On January 1916, Rentería Luviano appealed his case before Obregón, then serving as Secretary of War. Answering with his characteristic wit, Obregón replied, "No, General, you can stop worrying. We assume that you are the one responsible for Sánchez's death. As such, you have provided a valuable

Had Amaro stayed with Sánchez till the end, his military career might have warranted little more than an obscure footnote, while the history of Mexico's armed forces would likely have been drastically different. But Amaro proved much more astute than Sánchez, who never seemed to realize the futility of declaring his allegiance to Gutiérrez. Equally important was Amaro's decision to side with Carranza over Villa, although it is unclear if Amaro was more astute than the majority of *ex-sanchista* generals who had opted to join the villistas. Villa enjoyed a better reputation as a military tactician than Obregón at this point, and his celebrated Division of the North, with its ferocious cavalry charges, was thought to be invincible on the battlefield. In a pitched battle between the two generals, many would have bet on Villa. Certainly Amaro's near fatal meeting with Villa during which Villa had threatened to shoot him along with Sánchez, could not have endeared Amaro to the villista cause. The important point is that once Amaro made up his mind to side with the Constitutionalists, he showed none of the indecision and wavering that had been exhibited by Sánchez. For example, when General José I. Prieto, Villa's appointed governor in Michoacán, asked Amaro to join the villistas, Amaro made it very clear to Prieto where his loyalties lay:

I have fought without rest and will continue to fight while it is still possible against clericalism, large landowners, the militarism of the ex-Federals, the Spanish, and in general all those that do not contribute to the enrichment of our beloved homeland and the betterment of the working class, and given that you are pursuing ends that are identified with the elements that I have just pointed out, since within your ranks one can find ex-Federals and the rest, it is thus not possible for me to accept any kind of pact or alliance that is not in complete agreement with the ideals that have inspired me since 1910

service to the Revolution." (No, General, déjese usted de preocupaciones. Supongamos que usted es el responsable de la muerte de Sánchez. Con ello ha prestado un valioso servicio a la Revolución.) See Oikión Solano, *El constitucionalismo en Michoacán*, 289-290. Another theory, largely discredited, is that Amaro ordered Sánchez's execution. See Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*, 33.

I sincerely regret that our beloved land will find itself even more stained with the blood of brothers, and that it will find itself even further from the era of peace and progress that I yearn for, but how can I unite with ex-Federals, whom I have always combated and pursued? How can I adhere to powerful rulers, infamous exploiters of the poor, whom I have tried to exterminate? How can I permit public opinion to brand me a traitor and the curse of my homeland to fall upon me? It is not possible; and I will continue straight on my path, until triumph or death, and meanwhile I will calmly reject all those revolutionaries who are in error, as it is not possible for me to instill in them my ideals and patriotic and honorable ends that have always guided my conduct as a soldier.⁷³

Amaro's rejection of Villa came on the same day that he wrote Obregón requesting permission to join the Constitutionalist cause. But whereas Villa sought out Amaro, Obregón was not eager to accept Sánchez's former second-in-command. In fact, Obregón did not fully trust any ex-sanchista general. As Amaro would later relate, Obregón's lack of trust resulted directly from Sánchez's reputation for declaring himself "now a carrancista, then a convencionista, next a villista, and every "ista" that existed in those days."⁷⁴ Yet Obregón also knew that a showdown with Villa and his Division of

⁷³"Yo he luchado sin descanso y lucharé mientras me sea posible, contra el clericalismo, los grandes hacendados y propietarios, el militarismo ex-federal, los españoles, y en general contra todos aquellos que no contribuyen al engrandecimiento de nuestra querida Patria y al mejoramiento de la clase trabajadora, y como por otra parte ustedes persiguen fines que están identificados con los elementos que acabo de señalar, pues entre sus filas se encuentran ex-federales y demás, nó me es posible, por ello, aceptar ninguna clase de pacto o alianza, que no esté enteramente de acuerdo con los ideales que me han animado desde 1910 Lamento sinceramente el que nuestro querido suelo se vea aún manchado con sangre hermana, y que aún se vea muy lejana la era de paz y progreso que yo anhelo, pero ¿cómo unirse al elemento ex-federal, a quien siempre he combatido y perseguido?; ¿cómo adherirme a los potentados, infames explotadores del pobre, a quienes he procurado exterminar?; ¿cómo permitir que la opinión pública me señale como traidor y que caiga sobre mí la maldición de mi patria? Nó es posible; yo seguiré rectamente mi camino, hasta triunfar o morir, y mientras tanto serenamente rechazaré a todos aquellos revolucionarios que anden equivocados, por no serme posible inculcarles mis ideales y los fines patrióticos y honrados que siempre han normado mi conducta de soldado." Amaro to Prieto, March 8, 1915, ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 03, Documentos Relativos al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina.

⁷⁴"Este militar [Obregón], según me lo refirió en conversación el señor general Amaro, vio la llegada de los revolucionarios michoacanos con cierta desconfianza, en virtud de los frecuentes cambios que les había hecho dar sus antiguo jefe el general Sánchez, delcarándose ora *carrancista*, luego *convencionista*, después *villista* y todos los *istas* que hubo por aquellos días." Romero Flores, *Historia de la Revolución en Michoacán*, 148.

the North was increasingly likely and that he would need experienced leaders, such as Amaro, in order to defeat Villa on the battlefield. In turn, Amaro, one of the youngest generals of the Revolution at age 26, had staked his future military career, and perhaps even his life, on Obregón's untested military prowess against Villa. It would not go untested for long.

Amaro: A Closer Examination

Undoubtedly, Amaro's early reputation for violence was well-deserved. Although often described as audacity when exhibited on the battlefield it evolved into cruelty when demonstrated away from the front lines. Yet to depict Amaro strictly as a stereotype of the rigid, military disciplinarian, who metaphorically wielded a hammer as if each problem were a nail, would be to miss the much more complex nature of his character. One-sided depictions of famous personalities, no matter how entertaining they might be, are almost always incomplete. Such portrayals of Amaro are no exception. His energetic bursts of violence, for example, stand in contrast to the serious and rather subdued temperament he was also known to exhibit. Those who knew him, whether early in his career or later in his capacity as Secretary of War, often described him in remarkably similar terms. For example, one early portrayal of Amaro as a lieutenant depicted the young officer as one who "never got drunk, smoked, or played cards like other officers usually did."⁷⁵ General Alamillo Flores noted that when Amaro gave orders, one could denote a hint of timidity in his voice, and that at times it was even difficult to hear what he was saying or to initially determine what his true intentions

⁷⁵“... nunca se embriagaba, ni fumaba, ni jugaba baraja como solían hacerlo algunos jefes y oficiales.” Nazario Medina Dominguez, *La Ultima Batalla*, 18.

were.⁷⁶ Finally, in the same article in which Carleton Beals highlighted Amaro's rough treatment of his officers, Beals also described Amaro in the following manner:

He is shy and suspicious of people whom he does not know. He never boasts or talks about himself. He disclaims all knowledge of anything except military affairs, and when people remind him of his importance he answers with an embarrassed disclaimer, not at all affected. He lives a rigorous, abstemious life, which gives him no time for futile gestures. He does not drink or smoke, and he invariably leaves social gatherings by ten o'clock. In ordinary intercourse he is mild, quiet, gentle, almost deferential.⁷⁷

The depiction of Amaro as a shy, quiet, and gentle man, who was also known for leading cavalry charges and hitting fellow officers with a riding crop, is a key part of comprehending the true nature of his multifaceted personality. To add a further layer of complexity to our understanding, this "fierce Indian of the pendant earring" also took on the role of a father figure to his younger siblings.⁷⁸ It is easy to understand how such a relationship came about, since Amaro's father left home when many of the children were very young and any memory of their father would have been vague. Given that Amaro was the oldest of the ten siblings, and considering the circumstances surrounding their father's sudden death, it is logical to assume that he felt a responsibility to care for the material well being of his widowed mother and fatherless brothers and sisters. In fact, this is exactly what happened. The personal letters between Amaro and his siblings

⁷⁶Luis Gárfias Magaña, "El Ejército Mexicano de 1913 a 1938," in *El Ejército Mexicano: Historia desde los Orígenes hasta nuestros Días*, Jesús de León Toral, et. al. (México: Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, 1979), 471.

⁷⁷Carleton Beals, "The Indian Who Sways Mexico's Destiny," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1930.

⁷⁸ACT-AJA, Archivo Familiar. Although uncataloged, there are files for several of Amaro's younger brothers and sisters, including Antonio, Gonzalo, Guadalupe, Pedro, and Santos. It is noteworthy that Amaro chose to save the correspondence with his siblings, just as he saved the correspondence with his own children.

display a common theme in which the siblings consistently asked their oldest brother for financial help. For example, in a letter dated July 15, 1922, Gonzalo, addressing his brother as “*Señor General*,” asked Amaro if he could buy him a pair of soccer shoes, since their mother did not have enough money to buy shoes for him and his two brothers.⁷⁹ Much more important than soccer shoes were the medical bills, and much of the correspondence from Amaro’s sister, Guadalupe, dealt with requests to pay the bills related to their mother’s illnesses. In fact, throughout their adult lives, Amaro’s siblings depended on him to pay for the family’s expenses. He did so with regularity. In 1932, Amaro settled Gonzalo’s \$2000-peso hospital bill, and in the mid-1940s, he paid the monthly expenses for a house in Mexico City that he himself had bought for his siblings and his mother.⁸⁰

Amaro’s relationship with his brother Pedro, who eventually became a Colonel in the Mexican Army, and Santos, the youngest of the Amaro children, are the most interesting of all, for they display most clearly his fatherly role within the family. For example, many of Pedro’s letters to Amaro made references to unspecified events for which Pedro repeatedly apologized. In these letters, Pedro expressed great concern that Amaro had been angry or disappointed in him; overall these letters indicate Pedro’s great desire to secure Amaro’s approval. The following excerpts, taken from Pedro’s letters to his brother, illustrate this perfectly:

⁷⁹Gonzalo Amaro to Amaro, July 15, 1922, ACT-AJA Archivo Familiar, Expediente Gonzalo Amaro.

⁸⁰Letters from Guadalupe Amaro to Amaro written between 1944 and 1945, ACT-AJA, Archivo Familiar, Expediente Guadalupe Amaro. Guadalupe’s letters indicate that Amaro regularly paid bills for water, electricity, telephone, maid service, and medicine totaling \$230 pesos a month. Manuel Amaro, in an interview conducted on March 22, 2004, provided the information concerning Amaro’s purchase of a home for his mother and siblings.

. . . I want you to see that I am very pleased to be working and to be able to show you that my greatest pleasure is to always be reliable . . . I always want to hold my conduct to very high standards, so that you as well as everyone else will have a good impression of my actions.

. . . I have refrained from writing you for fear that out of disgust with my letters, perhaps because of false reports that you might have received about me, you might be angry . . . if for any reason you have any regrets about me, I beg that you forgive me, since you are now the only person whom I should turn to, and since you deserve from me the respect owed to a father.

Thus I will be grateful for any opinion and advice you might give me as I am waiting to proceed as you see fit . . .⁸¹

Like Pedro, Amaro's relationship with Santos reflected his role as a surrogate father within the family. Serving as Santo's legal guardian, Amaro gave his youngest brother permission to leave Mexico in 1928 and study chemistry in Berlin, Germany.⁸² From 1928 through 1934, correspondence between the two shows that Amaro regularly sent Santos funds to cover his tuition, books, and other living expenses. Of course, as a responsible father figure, he not only sent money, he also took the opportunity to give his young brother a bit of advice as he began his studies:

. . . [dedicate] yourself to your studies in order to acquire absolute competency in the material that you have chosen to dedicate your activities, as you should not forget that it is essential to always hold high the name of Mexico, demonstrating to all foreigners . . . that we are as capable as anyone . . . to carry out the most difficult mission entrusted to us. It would be very nice if you, through your enthusiasm and dedication,

⁸¹“ . . . quiero que Ud. vea que es mucho placer para mí tener trabajo y poderle demostrar que mi mayor gusto es siempre ser constante, . . . yo siempre quiero llevar una línea de conducta muy elevada, para que tanto Ud. como el mundo entero se tome un buen concepto de mis acciones.”; “. . . me había abstenido de escribirle por temor de que fuera a disgustarse con mis letras, pues quizá por informes falsos que le hayan dado de mi esté enojado . . . si por cualquier motivo usted tiene algo que sentir de mi, le ruego me perdone, ya que usted es por ahora la única persona a quien debo recurrir y que me merece el respeto de un padre.”; “Por lo que le agradeceré me da su opinión y consejos que yo estoy esperando para proceder como a usted mejor le parezca . . .” Letters from Pedro Amaro to Amaro dated May 4, 1922 and April 24, 1923, ACT-AJA, Archivo Familiar, Expediente Pedro Amaro.

⁸²Amaro to Santos Amaro, January 28, 1928, ACT-AJA, Archivo Familiar, Expediente Santos Amaro.

would occupy one of the top positions in your class, as this would be a legitimate source of pride for all of us⁸³

In sum, one can rightfully choose from a wide array of characteristics, many of them contradictory, when describing Amaro: unschooled, an autodidact, energetic, shy, ruthless, courageous, emotionally distant, and a father figure. All these descriptions, as well as many others, can describe Amaro's complex personality. Yet it is interesting that he himself used none of these descriptions in summing up his own personality. It is not that he could have truthfully denied such descriptions; for him, however, they were clearly not the most important traits. Speaking in the third person, Amaro stated in his interview with Valadés, "Concerning General Amaro, many legends have been told about him; General Amaro knows that he has always been an honorable man, because he is an idealist" ⁸⁴ Given the difficult challenges that Amaro would face in the years following the Mexican Revolution, maintaining this sense of idealism became crucial to his success in building a professional military out of the chaos of the revolutionary era.

⁸³ ". . . dedicandote al estudio a fin de adquirir una competencia absoluta en la materia que has escogido para dedicar tus actividades, pues no debes olvidar que es indispensable poner siempre muy alto el nombre de nuestro Mexico, demostrando a los extranjeros . . . que estamos tan capacitados como el que mas, para . . . desempeñar la misión mas difícil que se nos encomiende. Sería muy bonita que tu, por medio de tu entusiasmo y dedicación, llegarás a ocupar uno de los primeros lugares en tu clase . . ." Amaro to Santos Amaro, January 7, 1929, ACT-AJA, Archivo Familiar, Expediente Santos Amaro. Documentation in the Archivo Familiar related to another brother, Antonio, indicates that he studied in the U.S., and eventually received a degree in engineering. It is likely that Amaro paid for Antonio's education as well.

⁸⁴"Del general Amaro se han contado muchas leyendas; el general Amaro sabe que ha sido siempre un hombre recto, pues es un idealista . . ." Valadés, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 418.

CHAPTER III

A LOYAL GENERAL RISES THROUGH THE RANKS

Since joining the Revolution, Amaro had fought in over 75 major battles and scores of minor engagements. Thus he was familiar with the death and violence associated with warfare. Nothing in his past military experience, however, could have prepared him for the sheer number of dead men and horses that still littered the battlefield as he marched his cavalry into Celaya on April 8, 1915. Two days prior, the massed armies of Obregón and Villa, like two heavyweight boxers competing for the championship title, had engaged in a furious slugfest that left both armies exhausted and bloodied, but neither completely defeated. The small town of Celaya, about 140 miles northwest of Mexico City, was an unlikely place for such a momentous showdown. Indeed, in the days leading up to the battle, Obregón believed that the large concentration of villistas in Irapuato meant that the battle would most likely take place there.¹ Yet Obregón realized that a showdown somewhere in the central region of Mexico was urgently needed to break Villa's stranglehold on the north and to relieve the threat to oil-rich Tampico in the northeast.² Rather than follow Carranza's advice to retreat south from Mexico City, Obregón boldly headed north, hoping to goad Villa into battle at a time and place most advantageous to the Constitutionalists.

¹Barragán Rodríguez, *Historia del ejército*, vol. 2, 271.

²Linda B. Hall, *Alvaro Obregón*, 122.

In many ways, Celaya offered Obregón an excellent location to make a stand against Villa's offense-oriented battle tactics. Situated on a flat plain and bordered on the south and west by the river Rio de la Laja, the city's defenses were further buttressed by a series of irrigation ditches and canals that also functioned as an excellent system of trenches for Obregón's men.³ Calling in reinforcements from various outlying regions, by April 4 Obregón had amassed in Celaya an army of some 6000 cavalry, 5000 infantry, 86 machine guns, and 13 artillery pieces.⁴ The following day, he sent an advance guard under General Fortunato Maycotte to probe Villa's forces at Irapuato. But Maycotte never reached his destination for only 18 miles outside of Celaya, the advance guard ran head-on into Villa's main body. Seeing his column would soon be annihilated by Villa's overwhelming force, Maycotte urgently wired back to Celaya for reinforcements. Obregón personally led the rescue force that opened up an escape route for Maycotte, and together they beat a hasty retreat back to Celaya, drawing Villa's army of 12,000 men behind them.⁵ Thus, the stage for the first round between the two heavyweight champions was set. Viewing the events from the U.S., General Hugh L. Scott prophetically remarked, "I look for a death struggle there that is going to decide the future fate of Mexico."⁶

³Gabriel Gavira, *General de Brigada Gabriel Gavira. Su actuación político-militar revolucionaria* (México, 1933), 117.

⁴Alvaro Obregón, *Ocho mil kilómetros en campaña* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1973), 319.

⁵Archivo Juan Barragán, Centro de Estudios Sobre la Universidad (hereafter cited as AJB-CESU), Caja III, Expediente 8, Telegram dated April 7, 1915, 11:00 PM, Obregón to Carranza; and Hall, *Alvaro Obregón*, 123.

⁶Cited in Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 2, 322.

Amaro and the Battle of Celaya

Although Amaro had missed the brutal events of the first battle of Celaya, the blood-spattered terrain gave witness to the violent events of the past two days. Ignoring the advice of his subordinates, Villa had resorted to what had previously succeeded so well against the huertistas, vicious cavalry charges launched head-on into enemy lines. At dawn on April 6, Villa moved his men into position to initiate the first charge. Then, over the next thirty-two hours, his forces charged more than forty times, smashing headlong into Obregón's well-entrenched forces like a series of massive waves crashing against a great boulder.⁷ The first waves were the most difficult for Villa's men, for they were scarcely able to advance before deadly fire from the machine guns and the Yaqui Indian rifles decimated their ranks and broke their lines. Villa described the sadness that overcame him as he watched his men, those who had survived the first bloody assaults, retreat, regroup, and then fall as they took their first steps into enemy fire.⁸ But Villa's assault waves quickly grew stronger and more threatening as the momentum of the charges now placed his men directly at Obregón's battered and weakening front lines. Obregón urgently wired back to Carranza in Veracruz pleading for reinforcements and ammunition. His telegrams increasingly took on an impending sense of doom as Villa's vicious charges battered his lines unmercilessly.⁹ However, even Villa could not sustain the immense losses that his forces suffered, and the battlefield gradually became so

⁷AJB-CESU, Caja III, Expediente 8, Telegram dated April 7, 1915, 1:55 PM, Obregón to Carranza.

⁸Guzmán, *Memoirs of Pancho Villa*, 456-457.

⁹AJB-CESU, Caja III, Expediente 8. See the series of telegrams from Obregón to Carranza dated April 6-7, 1915, many of which are duplicated in Obregón, *Ocho mil kilómetros*, 321-326; and Barragán Rodríguez, *Historia del ejército*, vol. 2, 271-278.

littered with dead villista soldiers and horses that they began to impede each assault that followed.¹⁰ Sensing Villa's exhaustion, Obregón then took the offensive. While ordering his front lines to maintain a concentrated fire in the center, Obregón unleashed his own cavalry from his reserves. In a giant pincer-like maneuver, he crushed Villa's exhausted forces on each flank as they fled the battlefield. Obregón's delight at the battle's final outcome, perhaps masking a sense of relief, now came through as he telegraphed Carranza that Villa was reported to have been the first to flee the battlefield.¹¹

In this first round of fighting between the two "heavyweights" of the Mexican Revolution, Obregón suffered over 550 dead and more than 350 wounded, while Villa's losses numbered 1800 dead, 3000 wounded, and 500 taken prisoner.¹² Villa was bloodied but far from defeated, and now both sides urgently called in fresh reinforcements and sent for more ammunition in preparation for the inevitable second round. Amaro and his brigade's timely arrival on April 8 were thus a welcome addition to the Constitutionalist Army.¹³ That same day, Obregón ordered uniforms for Amaro's men, but only striped prison uniforms were available. So Amaro's brigade became known as the *rayados de Amaro* or striped men of Amaro.¹⁴ Overall, Obregón's rebuilt army now numbered 8000 cavalry and 7000 infantry, 3000 of which were either raw

¹⁰Obregón, *Ocho mil kilómetros*, 301.

¹¹AJB-CESU, Caja III, Expediente 8, Telegram dated April 7, 1915, 11:00 PM, Obregón to Carranza.

¹²Obregón, *Ocho mil kilómetros*, LXXXVIII.

¹³AJB-CESU, Caja III, Expediente 8, Telegram dated April 8, 1915, Obregón to Carranza.

¹⁴AJB-CESU, Caja III, Expediente 8, Telegram dated April 8, 1915, 6:00 PM, Obregón to Carranza; and Romero Flores, *Historia de la Revolución en Michoacán*, 149. It is unclear how many men Amaro brought with him into the Constitutionalist Army. Obregón stated only that Amaro added a cavalry brigade to his forces but did not include specific numbers. The referenced telegram shows that Obregón ordered 3000 uniforms for Amaro's forces, although it is doubtful that his brigade was initially this large.

recruits or part of the Red Battalion labor militias.¹⁵ The exact number of Villa's army is less certain, although it numbered somewhere between 20,000 and 35,000.¹⁶ Obregón prepared once again to fight a largely defensive battle, and consequently formed his men in a ring surrounding the city. Guarding the southern edge of the ring, Amaro's cavalry had dismounted from their horses and occupied the trenches to fight in the style of infantrymen. Lastly, and in hopes of duplicating the final cavalry charge that swept Villa's forces during the first battle, Obregón placed a reserve of 6000 cavalry under General Cesáreo Castro to the rear of his forces, where they remained hidden among a cluster of trees.¹⁷ On April 10, Villa attempted to persuade Obregón to abandon his defensive position and fight in the open fields, threatening to attack within three days should he refuse his offer.¹⁸ Obregón dug in and prepared for round two.

It was now April 12, and for the past two days a steady rain had fallen over Celaya. Anticipating Villa's attack, Obregón ordered his men to sleep in the trenches. He could only hope that the tarps he requested to protect them from the rain would soon arrive.¹⁹ Early on the morning of April 13, with the rain now over, lookouts in Obregón's camp could make out in the distance a growing dust cloud that signaled the arrival of Villa's cavalry and artillery columns. At the same time, Villa's infantry converged on Celaya by train.²⁰ It took several hours for Villa to position his men, but by 5:30 that

¹⁵Obregón, *Ocho mil kilómetros*, 327.

¹⁶Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 2, 324; and Hall, *Alvaro Obregón*, 123.

¹⁷Obregón, *Ocho mil kilómetros*, 307-311, 327.

¹⁸AJB-CESU, Caja III, Expediente 9, Telegram dated April 19, 1915, Obregón to Carranza.

¹⁹AJB-CESU, Caja III, Expediente 10, Telegram dated April 12, 1915, Obregón to Carranza.

²⁰Obregón, *Ocho mil kilómetros*, 310.

evening, Obregón reported that Villa's troops had taken positions directly facing his front lines; shortly thereafter, Villa let loose a barrage of artillery fire in anticipation of the first attack.²¹ Villa next unleashed his massed cavalry and infantry attack waves, and once again they crashed into Obregón's well-entrenched lines. Villa's cavalry and infantry relentlessly assaulted all sides of Obregón's defensive ring, continuing their attack throughout the night and into the next day. Several times Villa's men reached the lines, only to be repulsed before they could break through. As in the previous battle, Obregón's telegrams to Carranza displayed signs of desperation. By evening, Obregón had frantically wired Carranza several times for more ammunition, and Carranza promised to do all he could to ensure that the shipments of ammunition would arrive before Villa's men could cut the rail lines into Celaya. At some point during the furious battle, Villa attempted to speak with Obregón by telephone, but Obregón refused to take the call. Maintaining his characteristic sense of wit, Obregón reported to Carranza, "Moments ago Villa tried to speak with me by telephone, and I told him . . . Out of respect for you, I cannot express [what I told him] here."²²

Obregón's men, including the rayados de Amaro, ultimately held their positions against Villa's vicious assaults. Early the next morning, sensing that Villa had once again exhausted both his men and ammunition with his attack waves, Obregón unleashed Castro's reserve forces and ordered a massive cavalry charge in an attempt to finish off the enemy. Castro's forces swept around the right flank of the defensive ring from their

²¹AJB-CESU, Caja III, Expediente 10, Series of telegrams dated April 13, 1915, Obregón to Carranza.

²²AJB-CESU, Caja III, Expediente 11, Series of telegrams dated April 14, 1915, Obregón to Carranza and Carranza to Obregón. Obregón's exact words were, "Hace unos momentos Villa intentó hablar conmigo telefónicamente y lo mandé hacerlo . . . que por respeto a Ud. no puedo expresar aquí."

location at the rear and charged into the enemy's left flank. Prior to Castro's attack, Amaro had addressed his own men, saying, "We are going to prove to Obregón that we are men." He then added, "I will be the first to go in front, but he who runs away I will shoot. And if I also run, the last soldier can shoot me" ²³ Receiving the order to attack, Amaro's men rushed from their trenches, mounted their horses, and launched a simultaneous assault against the enemy's opposite flank. As in the first battle, the pincer-like envelopment, combined with a frontal assault from Obregón's infantry, completely crushed Villa's forces and sent them in a panicked retreat to Irapuato. ²⁴ Whatever impression the carnage of the first battle of Celaya may have left on Amaro, it was now overshadowed by a new intensity of killing previously unknown. Thousands of dead villistas carpeted the battlefield—more than 4000 died overall—while Obregón claimed

²³"Vamos a darle pruebas a Obregón que somos hombres. . . . Yo soy el primero que voy a ir adelante, pero el que me corra para atrás lo fusilo. Y si corro yo también, el último soldado me puede dar fuego . . ." See Guillermo Ramos Arizpe, "Testimonios de la Revolución: Miguel Ramos García," in *Boletín: Centro de Estudios de la Revolución Mexicana "Lázaro Cárdenas"*, A.C. (May 1982): 19.

²⁴AJB-CESU, Caja III, Expediente 11, Series of telegrams dated April 15, 1915, Obregón to Carranza. Three other cavalry brigades joined Amaro's forces in the charge against Villa's right flank. Years later, General Juan Barragán recounted a humorous anecdote in which each of Obregón's commanders took turns congratulating him on his stunning victory. When it came time for Amaro to speak, he stated "I congratulate you, *mi General*, and I hope to see you very soon in the Presidential Chair." Obregón cleverly responded, "I also hope to see you as President of the Republic—naturally after me." *El Mundo* (Habana, Cuba), article dated on or about July 19, 1928, ACT-AJA, Serie 0304, Agregados y Estudiantes Militares en el Extranjero, Expediente 07, General Juan Barragán, Inventario 237, Legajo 1, Fojas 8-9. Barragán's exact words were: "Amaro le dijo a Obregón estas parecidas palabras: 'Lo felicito, mi General, y espero verlo muy pronto en la Silla Presidencial'. Obregón le respondió: 'Yo también espero verlo a usted de Presidente de la República—naturalmente después de mí—'."

In light of Villa's defeat during the first battle of Celaya, it is difficult to understand why he made no adjustments to his strategy for the second battle. It may have been due to a lack of imagination, unwillingness to adapt to new conditions, or simply over confidence in a strategy that, until Celaya, had worked so well in the past. It should be noted, however, that Villa was not the only military leader to adhere to an offensive strategy marked by infantry assaults against an entrenched enemy with automatic weapons. Certainly, the Germans, French, and British relied heavily on the very same tactics during World War I, with equally disastrous results.

to have captured 6000 prisoners, 1000 horses, 5000 rifles, and 32 cannons. Obregón's own losses were miniscule in comparison: 276 dead and 138 wounded.²⁵

Despite Villa's devastating back-to-back defeats at Celaya, Obregón and Villa would go several more "rounds" as the two armies battered and bloodied each other throughout a series of battles at León from April 29 to June 5, with the victory eventually going to Obregón. The Constitutionalists delivered the final knockout blow on July 10 at Aguascalientes, where they eliminated the Division of the North as a military force, from which only fragmented guerrilla groups would survive.²⁶ Amaro did not participate in these remaining battles, for he had been ordered initially to remain in Celaya to prevent Villa's forces from moving south and seizing the communication routes with Veracruz.²⁷ Yet Amaro did not need to participate to realize that the potent combination of trenches, barbed wire, and machine guns had provided Mexico's revolutionary generals with a new and deadly capability—a capability that manufactured death and destruction on a magnitude never before witnessed in the previous ages of warfare. In the hands of a proper and legitimate national authority, such a capability could bring a decisive end to the chaotic violence that had not ceased since 1910. But in the hands of unruly and undisciplined revolutionary generals, it could escalate into an endless cycle of bloodshed and national decay.

²⁵Obregón, *Ocho mil kilómetros*, 315.

²⁶For a good overview of these battles, see Hall, *Alvaro Obregón*, 133-139; and Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 2, 325-328.

²⁷Obregón, *Ocho mil kilómetros*, 351.

Amaro's Early Experience as a Commander

Amaro did not remain in Celaya very long. On April 20, 1915, Obregón named him *Comandante Militar* (military commander) of the 5th Division of the Army of the Northwest in the state of Michoacán, where he undertook the crucial task of purging the region of villista influence.²⁸ Very quickly, however, someone from Amaro's past sought to settle an old score with him. General Francisco Murguía had not forgotten the treacherous manner by which Amaro had attacked his forces at Cerro de las Vueltas the previous year. With the main villista threat largely contained, he was now eager to punish Amaro. Thus, on June 14 Murguía requested that Carranza bring Amaro before the Supreme Military Tribunal on charges of treason, a charge that threatened to end Amaro's military career, if not his life.²⁹ Carranza delegated the matter to Obregón, who, in turn, suggested that Carranza convene a commission to investigate the matter. Apparently, Obregón hoped that such a commission would ease Murguía's ardent desire to bring Amaro before a military court, a hasty move that Obregón believed could only aggravate an already "delicate" situation, and one that could possibly have "fatal consequences."³⁰

Given the serious nature of Murguía's accusation, Amaro must have realized the clear advantage that someone of Obregón's political and military stature could provide him. By fighting courageously for Obregón during the critical battle of Celaya, Amaro

²⁸AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 1, Foja 200; Obregón, *Ocho mil kilómetros*, 331; and Oikión Solano, *El constitucionalismo en Michoacán*, 297. At the same time, Obregón named General Alfredo Elizondo, an ex-sanchista general who also helped lead the cavalry charge at the second battle of Celaya, as governor of Michoacán.

²⁹Barragán Rodríguez, *Historia del ejército*, vol. 2, 386.

³⁰AJB-CESU, Caja III, Expediente 19, Telegrams dated June 16, 1915, Carranza to Obregón and Obregón to Carranza.

had erased his past association with the vacillating Sánchez, proved his loyalty to Obregón, and showcased his talent as a skilled warrior and leader. In turn, Obregón, who clearly entertained political aspirations of his own, understood that he could not afford to lose such a valuable general, and thus used his influence to deflect any harm that might befall him. Yet someone had to pay the price and satisfy Murguía's desire for revenge and justice. That unfortunate person was General Anastasio Pantoja, whom Amaro arrested and shipped off to Obregón. Obregón then sent the ill-fated Pantoja to Murguía as the "*único culpable*" or sole person responsible for the attack at Cerro de las Vueltas. Once in custody, Murguía reportedly interrogated Pantoja in the following manner:

Murguía: "Why did you [and the others] betray me at Las Vueltas?" Pantoja: "*Mi General*, it wasn't me, it was Amaro." Murguía: "But you and he made a commitment with me to recognize the legality of Don Venustiano [Carranza], you and Amaro signed the treaty disavowing the Convention, why did you permit the betrayal after Morelia, when I left?" Pantoja: "*Mi General*, you know very well that those who gave the orders within our group were Gertrudis [Sánchez] and Amaro." Murguía: "Fine, but why did you not abandon them?" Pantoja, silent, had no answer, and Murguía promptly had him shot.³¹

³¹Leopoldo Zíncúnegui Tercero, "La verdad sobre los discutidos combates del 'Cerro de las Vueltas'," Part XI, *El Legionario* XII, no. 142 (December 31, 1962): 21-22; and Oviedo Mota, *El trágico fin del General Gertrudis G. Sánchez*, 36-38. The historical record does not provide any explicit reason as to why Amaro singled out Pantoja as the guilty party, although it is noteworthy that during Murguía's counterattack on Amaro's forces at Cerro de las Vueltas, Pantoja never answered Amaro's desperate plea for help. Thus Amaro may have blamed Pantoja for his devastating defeat and the problems that followed. Ironically then, Pantoja was simultaneously guilty of betraying Murguía by not abandoning Amaro, and of betraying Amaro by not attacking Murguía, even though all parties involved were professed members of the Constitutionalist cause. In sum, Pantoja's tragic plight underscores the fact that the decision to renounce or profess support for a particular cause during the Revolution was a dangerous, if not hopeless, undertaking. Certainly, without a powerful patron, such as the one Amaro had in Obregón, such decisions could have, in the words of Obregón, "fatal consequences." Zíncúnegui Tercero's original Spanish version of the interrogation reads as follows: Murguía: ¿por qué me traicionaron en "Las Vueltas"? Pantoja: mi general, yo no fui, fue Amaro. Murguía: pero usted y él se comprometieron conmigo para reconocer la

Having survived, through Obregón's intervention, this delicate situation, Amaro spent the next several years chasing down villistas and zapatistas while trying to bring some sense of order to Michoacán. However, not all of Amaro's troubles stemmed from the actions of enemy forces, as he experienced for the first time as a commander the corruption and lack of discipline that existed within his own military forces. For example, one of Amaro's regional commanders wrote that the townspeople of Tejámen complained of daily robberies and murders; another urgent telegram reported how troops had burnt several bridges, destroyed four kilometers of telegraph lines, and raped a young woman.³² In both these cases, the perpetrators were soldiers who had recently deserted; it appears that those soldiers who were still under Amaro's command refrained from such overt criminal acts. However, the frequent instances of desertion were in and of themselves a problem, for the deserters could just as easily join the villistas or zapatistas as they could resort to banditry. On a broader and more significant level, the frequent number of desertions highlighted the lack of cohesion within the military, as well as the absence of any sense of loyalty or identification with the military as a legitimate institution of the state.

Of the charges leveled against those soldiers still under Amaro's command, most revolved around the issue of nonpayment for supplies or instances of extortion. In the latter case, forces under Amaro's command demanded that the municipal president in the town of Acámbaro impose a loan of 10,000 pesos on the local businesses, but they failed

legalidad de don Venustiano, usted y Amaro firmaron el manifiesto desconociendo a la "Convención", ¿por qué permitió usted la traición desde Morelia, cuando salí? Pantoja: mi general, usted bien sabe que quien mandaba entre nosotros eran Gertrudis y Amaro. Murguía: bien. ¿pero por qué usted no los abandonó?

³²AHSDN/FR, Expediente XI/481.5/111, Caja 69, Durango, Fojas 111 (Letter dated August 10, 1917) and 141 (Telegram dated August 27, 1917).

to repay the money as promised.³³ More common, however, were protests from ranchers who were not compensated for food and supplies confiscated by local troops, or from representatives of the Office of the National Treasury, who complained of poor treatment at the hands of Amaro's men.³⁴ Amaro showed little patience for unruly behavior. In one case, he threatened a captain that should he hear of any more abuses by men under the officer's command, he would take action against the captain himself.³⁵ Amaro, however, was also the object of complaints. In October 1917 a local farmer accused him of confiscating two carloads of corn for his troops; years later, the municipal president of Iguala charged Amaro and his men with confiscating the doors of the local hospital and a school during a troop deployment.³⁶ Although Amaro denied both of these charges, the letter from General Alejo Mastache that accused him of confiscating thirty head of cattle worth 1500 pesos may have very well been true.³⁷ Mastache, it should be recalled, was the general who years earlier had captured Sánchez, and, along with General Renturía Luviano, ordered his execution. As in the case of desertions, the charges of nonpayment and confiscation of goods highlighted a larger problem. Amaro and the other regional commanders needed a reliable system of supply and disbursement if they hoped to

³³AHSDN/FR, Expediente XI/481.5/172, Caja 94, Michoacán, Foja 70, Letter dated March 7, 1916.

³⁴AHSDN/FR, Expediente XI/481.5/111, Caja 69, Durango, Foja 113, Letter dated August 12, 1917; and AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 1, Fojas 242, 243, and 244, Letters dated, respectively, July 1, July 5, and July 9, 1918.

³⁵AHSDN/FR, Expediente XI/481.5/111, Caja 69, Durango, Foja 217, Letter dated May 29, 1917.

³⁶AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 5, Fojas 1008, 1011, 1017, and 1018 (Series of Letters dated October 15, 1917 – August 10, 1918); and Tomo 2, Fojas 270 and 272 (Letters dated March 24 and July 2, 1919). Amaro denied both charges, and in the case dealing with the farmer's corn, a military tribunal officially cleared Amaro of any wrongdoing. See Tomo 5, Foja 1124, Letter dated March 13, 1922.

³⁷AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 5, Fojas 1083-1084, Letter dated August 1, 1917.

properly maintain a disciplined and orderly unit; the lack of such a system often forced the regional armies to fend for themselves.

Amaro: Loyal Obregonista

The years following the battle of Celaya in April 1915, were ones of great change and transformation in Mexico, particularly at the national level. As Villa and Zapata grew progressively weaker, Carranza gradually consolidated his control over the nation, largely due to Obregón's skill, both on the battlefield and in the political arena. By 1917, Carranza had enough political and military support to easily win the presidential elections held that March. In May, after years of warfare and political chaos, Carranza became Mexico's first "revolutionary" president. Yet Carranza stubbornly resisted the socioeconomic reforms called for in the Constitution of 1917, and thus, for many, was not sufficiently "revolutionary" to entrust with the continued leadership of the nation. In the eyes of a number of political leaders and revolutionary generals, that honor fell to the immensely popular and charismatic Obregón, the widely recognized military hero of the Revolution who had "saved" the Revolution by defeating Villa. Not surprisingly, Carranza's attempt at the end of his term in 1920 to interfere with Obregón's bid for the presidency ignited a call for rebellion—the Plan of Agua Prieta—led by Obregón himself. Only a handful of generals remained loyal to Carranza, and as Obregón's powerful army moved south from Sonora to march on Mexico City that April, Carranza and his few supporters fled by train. A week later, after very little fighting, and with his

army dissolved, Carranza met a somewhat ignoble end: he was shot by anti-carrancista forces while sleeping in an old shack.³⁸

Throughout this period and continuing into the Obregón presidency, Amaro remained a loyal obregonista, fully supporting the Plan of Agua Prieta and helping Obregón impose order and stability on the outlying regions. Prior to the Agua Prieta rebellion, Amaro took on a wide array of assignments and commands. At the end of 1915, Amaro's area of responsibility as the Chief of Military Operations was increased from Michoacán to include Guanajuato and Querétaro. By March 1916, Amaro led several campaigns against zapatistas in northern Guerrero and southern Morelos. In February 1917, Amaro was placed under the command of his old nemesis Murguía, where he led numerous expeditionary columns in Durango and Chihuahua in a concerted effort to track down Villa and the remnants of his army.³⁹ After the 1920 Agua Prieta rebellion and in return for his loyalty to Obregón, Amaro was promoted to the rank of general de división, the highest rank within the Mexican military, and thus joined an elite group comprising only eleven other officers.⁴⁰ During Obregón's presidency, Amaro served as the Chief of Military Operations for the 3rd Military Zone (encompassing the states of Coahuila, Nuevo León and San Luis Potosí) between August 1920 and March 1923. After a general reorganization of the military zones, Amaro then took command as

³⁸For an in-depth examination of these events, see Hall, *Alvaro Obregón*, 163-248. For a detailed account of Carranza's final days, see John W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1919-1936* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), 41-48.

³⁹AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 1, Foja 200; *ibid.*, Tomo 5, Fojas 1736-1737; and Hoja de Servicios, 1927, ACT-AJA, Archivo Familiar. For a detailed discussion of Amaro and his various assignments during this period see Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*, 37-53.

⁴⁰Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 69. Amaro was one of nine officers who received a promotion to *general de división*. Prior to the Agua Prieta rebellion, there were a total of seven *divisionarios*. The rebellion eliminated four of them, thus bringing the total number of *divisionarios* in the Mexican military to twelve.

the Chief of Military Operations for the 7th Military Zone (Nuevo León), a position he held for the remainder of the year.⁴¹

Amaro's assignment to the northern states of Coahuila, Nuevo León and San Luis Potosí was no accident, for it reflected the great trust that Obregón had in him to consolidate political control of the countryside. One of his first jobs was to dispose of the troublesome Pablo González, the one *divisionario* during the Agua Prieta rebellion who supported neither Carranza nor Obregón.⁴² Between July 6-14, 1920, González led a series of attacks on Monterrey in an ill-conceived coup attempt, which Amaro, aided by Generals Eugenio Martínez and Arnulfo Gómez and supported by 1200 Yaqui Indian warriors, quickly put down.⁴³ Amaro also acted swiftly in Coahuila to prevent the political instability in the region from turning violent. In December 1922, when state deputies attempted to occupy the parliamentary chamber, Amaro used his forces to block the occupation and simultaneously stationed his troops around the Governor's Palace to prevent the public demonstrations from becoming uncontrollable.⁴⁴

Obregón's trust in Amaro was evident later when Obregón dispatched him to maintain order in Nuevo León during that state's heated and often violent 1923 gubernatorial elections. For instance, when a violent incident occurred between supporters of the two candidates, Obregón ordered Amaro to investigate the matter using

⁴¹AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 5, Foja 1737; and Gárfias Magaña, "El Ejército Mexicano de 1913 a 1938," 452.

⁴²In Spanish, a *divisionario* referred to an officer who had attained the rank of general de división.

⁴³Randall G Hansis, "Alvaro Obregón: The Mexican Revolution and the Politics of Consolidation, 1920-1924," (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1971), 35-37; Blocker, Eagle Pass, Texas, NAW, RG 59, M274, 812.00/24248, July 6, 1920; *ibid.*, 812.00/24249, July 7, 1920; and Bowman, Monterey, *ibid.*, 812.00/24344, July 14, 1920.

⁴⁴Blocker, Piedras Negras, *ibid.*, 812.00/26161, January 3, 1923.

his “customary diligence and habitual energy.”⁴⁵ After another series of violent altercations between the two political factions, Obregón ordered Amaro to disarm the local rural groups who had been the source of much of the violence. Finally, as the elections neared, Obregón instructed Amaro to station his troops in Monterrey to prevent demonstrations for either party from turning violent. After the elections, Amaro’s troops were used to guarantee the safety of all elected deputies. Obregón’s description of Amaro as serious, prudent, and impartial, and as one whose reports were known to be factual and not overly influenced by emotions, clearly illustrates his confidence in Amaro to faithfully carry out his orders.⁴⁶

Of all the assignments Obregón gave Amaro, perhaps none was more important than the one related to Villa’s assassination. Obregón’s ability to control the many factions involved in Mexican politics remained far from certain, and with the 1924 presidential elections drawing near, ambitious revolutionary generals were not content to have Obregón dictate Mexico’s next president. In this sense, Villa was one of the administration’s more worrisome and unpredictable *caudillos*; he boasted of having an army of 1800 loyal men and had publicly toyed with the idea of entering politics.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Villa had developed a close relationship with Adolfo de la Huerta, who, as interim president after Carranza’s overthrow, had negotiated Villa’s “retirement” from

⁴⁵Obregón’s exact words to Amaro were, “Hácese indispensable, por tanto, que usted, con diligencia acostumbra y su habitual energía, proceda en este asunto esclarecer completamente hechos, para deslizar en absoluto responsabilidad.” Obregón to Amaro, July 5, 1923, Archivo General de la Nación/Papeles Presidenciales (hereafter cited as AGN/PP), Grupo Obregón-Calles, Caja 147, Expediente 408-N-9, Legajo 1.

⁴⁶Obregón to Tamez, September 1, 1923, *ibid.*, Legajo 3; Obregón to Amaro, September 9, 1923, *ibid.*, Legajo 2; and Obregón to Amaro, September 15, 1923, *ibid.*

⁴⁷Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 178; and David A. Brush, “The De la Huerta Rebellion in Mexico, 1923-1924” (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1975), 49-50.

the military and national politics. Villa's statement to a journalist that he would once again return to the battlefield should de la Huerta need his support certainly must have worried Obregón.⁴⁸ The constant fear of a northern rebellion, coupled with Villa's suggestive declarations, made it imperative that Villa would have to be eliminated. Amaro did not carry out the assassination himself, of course. That job had been delegated to a group of eight men led by Jesús Salas Barraza. But correspondence between Salas Barraza and Amaro shows that Amaro was clearly involved in the planning. On July 2, 1923, just weeks before Villa's assassination, Salas Barraza had his brother, Enrique, personally deliver to Amaro a letter concerning a matter of "highest confidentiality," to which Amaro then responded with verbal instructions to Salas Barraza via Enrique. Several days latter, Salas Barraza wrote Amaro once again, indicating that Villa was making preparations for a rebellion and would "at the first opportunity" return Mexico once again to a state of warfare. In this same letter, Salas Barraza confirmed his determination to carry out the assassination and asked that Amaro help his family obtain economic aid should he not survive.⁴⁹

Salas Barraza did, in fact, organize a squad of gunmen to assassinate Villa. Early in the morning of July 20, as Villa and five of his men drove through the town of Parral, the assassins flung open the windows of a rented house and poured a hail of bullets into the occupants. With nine bullets in his body, Villa was already dead when the car careened out of control and slammed into a tree.⁵⁰ Months later, writing from a jail cell

⁴⁸Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 66-70, and 177-178.

⁴⁹Letters from Salas Barraza to Amaro, dated July 2 and 7, 1920, ACT-AJA, Serie 0101, Estado Mayor y Cuerpo Auxiliar, Expediente 50, Jesús Salas Barraza, Inventario 50, Legajo 1, Fojas 31-32.

⁵⁰Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 179-180; and Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 765-767.

in Chihuahua where he was facing a 20-year sentence, Salas Barraza again wrote Amaro. This time he pleaded with Amaro to use his significant influence with the governor of Chihuahua, General Ignacio Enríquez, on his behalf. Amaro wrote back a week later, assuring Salas Barraza that he never forgot his friends, that he was sending a letter to Enríquez that very day, and that he would soon send his brother with funds, a possible reference to a bribe. In his letter to Enríquez, Amaro asked that the governor find a legal way to free their “dear friend” Salas Barraza, not on the grounds of innocence, but because Salas Barraza had “removed from our homeland a constant menace” who had committed “countless crimes” with impunity from the judicial authorities. Six days later, Salas Barraza wrote Amaro that his sentence was about to be reviewed and resolved in his favor, adding that the favorable resolution resulted “because of the actions of my friends, among them, your extremely valuable [actions].”⁵¹ Amaro’s successful work in planning Villa’s assassination and in protecting Salas Barraza were important milestones in his career, for as Loyo makes clear in her book on Amaro, Obregón came to see him as a disciplined officer capable of interpreting the orders of his superiors, even when those orders involved carrying out the “dirty work” of those at the highest levels of government.⁵² In helping eliminate Villa, a clear threat to Obregón’s presidency, Amaro

⁵¹Letter from Salas Barraza to Amaro dated October 3, 1923, *ibid.*, Foja 43; Letter from Amaro to Salas Barraza dated October 11, 1923, *ibid.*, Foja 44; Letter from Amaro to Enríquez dated October 11, 1923, *ibid.*, Foja 45 (“Las autoridades judiciales, ni siquiera intentaron alguna ocasión proceder en su contra en alguno de los incontables crímenes cometidos por el bandolero, y en cambio, hoy parece que la suerte ha sido un poco adversa para nuestro amigo, Salas B. a quienes han sentenciado veinte años de prisión no obstante de haber quitado a nuestra Patria una constantemente amenaza.”); and Letter from Salas Barraza to Amaro dated October 17, 1923, *ibid.*, Foja 46 (“Mi sentencia en revisión parece que está por resolverse favorablemente, debido á las gestiones de mis amigos, entre estas, la suya valiosísima . . .”).

⁵²Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*, 109.

had demonstrated once again not only that he was a capable general, but, more importantly, that his loyalty was beyond question.

Early Attempts at Professionalization

In addition to carrying out Obregón's orders to pacify the countryside, Amaro also attempted to transform the military forces under his new command into a more disciplined and cohesive unit. The task would not be easy, nor was it entirely successful, but it did provide him with valuable experience for the grueling job he would later confront of professionalizing the military on a national level. As the new Chief of Military Operations for the 3rd Military Zone in 1920, Amaro found his command, headquartered in Saltillo, Coahuila, to be in complete disorder, with cavalry and infantry units extremely factionalized and resistant to the idea of forming larger, more complete units.⁵³ Amaro also had to confront a wide array of personnel and administrative issues, from gaining permission to dismiss officers from active duty to determining proper chain-of-command procedures to arguing with higher headquarters about the need for more instructors and clerks and fewer engineers, mechanics, and other specialists.⁵⁴ As commander, Amaro pleaded for newly commissioned officers from the Colegio Militar to fill longstanding officer vacancies, and also sought to bring in new recruits, those with a "*historia militar limpia*" or clean military record, to mix in with his current veterans and

⁵³Alvarez to Amaro, October 6, 1920, ACT-AJA, Serie 0101, Estado Mayor y Cuerpo Auxiliar, Expediente 1, Coronel José Alvarez, Inventario 1, Legajo 1, Fojas 3-4.

⁵⁴Ibid.; and Alvarez to Amaro, October 11, 1920, ibid., Foja 7.

help reform their poor habits.⁵⁵ To bring the different factions together and instill a sense of unity, Amaro had several proposals for a unit arm patch made up, including one decorated with blue and white stripes, the same striped colors that Amaro's "rayados" had worn at Celaya.⁵⁶

As one might expect, the professionalization process was often slow and filled with setbacks. At times, Amaro would gain authorization to implement changes to existing regulations, orders, and codes, only to have them later revoked by Secretary of War General Enrique Estrada. Estrada claimed he needed more time to study Amaro's reforms, and only if warranted, would he apply them uniformly throughout all the commands.⁵⁷ Some projects, no matter how badly needed or desired, such as the building of a new barracks for the soldiers, remained unfinished for lack of funds.⁵⁸

In addition to reorganizing his command, Amaro expended a great deal of energy trying to outfit his unit, a particularly difficult task given the lack of an efficient supply system and the rampant corruption that had only exacerbated the system's inherent inefficiencies. Amaro's Chief of Staff, Colonel José Alvarez, described in a letter how his trip to the supply depot turned into a fight for scarce supplies as each officer claimed that his division's request for equipment was a matter of great urgency. Alvarez likened the officers to a swarm of ants wanting their turn at the supplies, but with no one getting much of anything in the end. Eventually, Alvarez managed to find what he called the

⁵⁵ Alvarez to Amaro, December 21, 1922, *ibid.*, Legajo 5, Foja 272; Alvarez to Amaro, December 25, 1922, *ibid.*, Foja 274; Amaro to Alvarez, January 30, 1923, *ibid.*, Foja 289; and Alvarez to Amaro, December 23, 1920, *ibid.*, Legajo 1, Foja 27.

⁵⁶ Alvarez to Amaro, April 23, 1923, *ibid.*, Legajo 2, Fojas 110-116.

⁵⁷ Alvarez to Amaro, December 23, 1920, *ibid.*, Legajo 1, Foja 27.

⁵⁸ Amaro to Alvarez, February 5, 1923, *ibid.*, Legajo 5, Foja 297.

“*llave de oro*” or golden key to the supply system, a section of the depot marked “reserved.” In this way he requisitioned a large quantity of various uniform items and military supplies.⁵⁹ Having to “go around the system” in order to get supplies as Alvarez did seemed to be quite common, and finding hidden or reserve stockpiles was certainly one way to circumvent the normal supply system. Perhaps a more reliable way was to go straight to the Secretary of War and ask him directly, a tactic that Alvarez also employed. Praising Amaro’s skills as a general, General Estrada authorized the entire list of supplies that Alvarez had requested on Amaro’s behalf, including saddles, hats, ammunition, musical instruments, German-manufactured Mauser rifles, and repair supplies.⁶⁰ Apparently, not all of Amaro’s requests were purely official in nature. He also purchased tailor-made clothing, tiger skin rugs, and a wide array of polo equipment, including helmets, saddles, chaps, and uniforms, all of which were imported through the fashionable Ciudad de Londres department store.⁶¹

One of Amaro’s more innovative projects, one that clearly foreshadowed his later work as Director of Military Education, involved his attempt to provide his troops with a program of formal instruction. In January 1921, Amaro hired the first professor, Higinio Vázquez Santana, and then, several months later, added Rómulo Timperi, a fencing expert, and Major Carlos Cárdenas, who was to teach both fencing and marksmanship.⁶²

⁵⁹ Alvarez to Amaro, November 9, 1920, *ibid.*, Legajo 1, Foja 13.

⁶⁰ Alvarez to Amaro, December 23, 1920, *ibid.*, Foja 27.

⁶¹ Alvarez to Amaro, January 13, 1921, *ibid.*, Foja 44; Alvarez to Amaro, April 23, 1923, *ibid.*, Legajo 2, Fojas 110-116; Alvarez to Amaro, December 2, 1922, *ibid.*, Expediente 1, Coronel José Alvarez, Inventario 1, Legajo 5, Fojas 262-263; Amaro to Alvarez, December 5, 1922, *ibid.*, Foja 264; and Amaro to Alvarez, *ibid.*, Foja 270.

⁶² Alvarez to Amaro, January 13, 1921, *ibid.*, Legajo 1, Foja 44; and Alvarez to Amaro, June 11, 1921, *ibid.*, Legajo 3, Foja 140.

Holding on to his instructors was another matter, however. Despite Amaro's efforts to secure funds, Vázquez Santana threatened to resign that November since he had not been paid, while Cárdenas received orders to transfer to another division, a move that Amaro rigorously opposed.⁶³ Amaro's plans for educating his troops began in earnest with the hiring of Ignacio A. Richkarday in August 1922, a man once described as the "interpreter of Amaro's thoughts" and a person whose ideas pervaded many of Amaro speeches.⁶⁴ The two men would develop a prolonged and close friendship, with Richkarday being a key member of Amaro's staff during his tenure as Secretary of War and a strong proponent of military education. By December, Richkarday had established an education program for Amaro's troops, a program that Amaro hoped to expand by seeking authorization to hire additional instructors.⁶⁵

Amaro also devoted time and money to obtaining various supplies, especially books and magazines, that would complement and enhance his education program. Typewriters and mimeograph machines were high on the list of desired equipment, since they could be used to duplicate instructional material and print the division's own magazine. The funds could also be used to purchase desks, filing cabinets, and bookcases.⁶⁶ Amaro's fascination with books was also evident in the large library that he established for his division. Throughout his years as commander of both the 3rd and 7th

⁶³Amaro may have eventually secured funding, since Vázquez Santana's resignation, if in fact he did resign, appears to have only been temporary. Alvarez to Amaro, November 19, 1921, *ibid.*, Foja 168; and Amaro to Alvarez, November 25, 1921, *ibid.*, Foja 176.

⁶⁴Amaro to Alvarez, August 5, 1922, *ibid.*, Legajo 5, Foja 248; and Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 264.

⁶⁵Amaro to Alvarez, December 5, 1922, *ibid.*, Foja 264.

⁶⁶Alvarez to Amaro, January 21, 1921, *ibid.*, Legajo 1, Fojas 58-60; and Richkarday to Amaro, September 4, 1922, *ibid.*, Expediente 46, Coronel Ignacio A. Richkarday, Inventario 46, Legajo 1, Foja 1.

Military Zones, Amaro acquired such books as *El Quixote*, the Bible, the multivolume classic *México a traves de los siglos* (Mexico through the centuries), and the *Dictionary of Military Sciences*, as well as volumes related to guerilla and siege warfare, explosives, Mauser rifle manuals, the International Conference of the Hague transcripts, livestock raising, veterinary medicine, and horsemanship.⁶⁷ Amaro's literary tastes extended well beyond military matters or Spanish and Mexican writers. He also acquired a fifteen-volume collection of works by Victor Hugo, the French Romantic poet and novelist best known for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Les Misérables*; a magazine collection entitled *Némisis* by the Colombian-born writer José María Vargas Vila; and various works by the Italian author Guido Da Verona.⁶⁸ While one can only speculate how these authors may have influenced Amaro, it is interesting to note that Hugo, whose father served as a general in Napoleon's army, greatly admired the famous French emperor and military genius, and perhaps reflected a similar sentiment held by Amaro. Furthermore, as one of the leaders of romanticism, an artistic and intellectual movement that sought to overturn existing social conventions, particularly the position of the aristocracy, Hugo's works must have surely resonated with Amaro's sense of his own role within the Mexican Revolution in overthrowing the Díaz regime. Similarly, Amaro may have identified with Hugo's numerous poems, which often stressed the social disquiet of post-

⁶⁷ Alvarez to Amaro, May 18, 1921, *ibid.*, Expediente 1, Coronel José Alvarez, Inventario 1, Legajo 3, Foja 130; Alvarez to Amaro, December 29, 1921, *ibid.*, Legajo 4, Foja 191; Alvarez to Amaro, December 26, 1922, *ibid.*, Legajo 5, Foja 276; and Alvarez to Amaro, March 22, 1923, *ibid.*, Foja 323.

⁶⁸ Alvarez to Amaro, December 2, 1922, *ibid.*, Fojas 262-263.

Revolutionary France, as well as with Hugo's most famous work of fiction, *Les Misérables*, which emphasized the need for social justice.⁶⁹

When Amaro left Saltillo, Coahuila in March 1923 to take command of the 7th Military Zone in Monterrey, Nuevo León, he took his education program with him. Within months after Amaro's arrival, Richkarday had established a rigorous program of instruction, the details of which provide great insight into the level of officer education common during that era. They also show the great emphasis that Amaro placed on educating his officers.⁷⁰ Richkarday divided the officers into two groups. The first consisted of officers already literate, with the illiterate remaining in the second group. The first group attended classes Monday through Friday from 10:00 – 11:00 AM, with each day's instruction devoted to a different subject, including geometry, grammar, math, and geography. The only exception was Fridays, when the group covered a variety of subjects, such as Mexican history, calligraphy, reading, and drawing. By necessity, instruction for the second group, which took place from 11:00 – 12:00 AM, focused on reading, writing, and basic math, with intermittent lessons on history and geography. While one group was in class, the other would be studying, thus providing each group with two full hours of class. While classroom instruction lasted only two hours, Amaro kept his officers extremely busy throughout the entire day, where they followed a rigorous training schedule that began at 6:00 AM and ended at 9:00 PM. Thus, in addition to two hours of classroom education, Amaro's officers also devoted many

⁶⁹Sir Paul Harvey and J. E. Heseltine, eds., *The Oxford Companion to French Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 350-352; and Morris Bishop, *A Survey of French Literature*, vol. 2, *The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, revised ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1965), 39-41.

⁷⁰Richkarday to Alvarez, April 24, 1923, *ibid.*, Expediente 46, Coronel Ignacio A. Richkarday, Inventario 46, Legajo 1, Foja 2.

additional hours, both on the field and in the classroom, to horsemanship, fencing, gymnastics, and military studies.⁷¹

Obregón's Influence on Amaro

There is little doubt that Amaro's attempts to professionalize the troops under his command were based on his own deep-seated desire to forge a disciplined, competent, and loyal military unit from factions that previously had been highly influenced by factional loyalties, corruption, petty rivalries, extortion, and graft. Yet it is also clear that Amaro's early efforts in this area ran parallel with, and were undoubtedly influenced by, Obregón's view that the professionalization of the military remained critical to ending the constant cycle of rebellion and political instability. What is most striking is the manner in which Obregón, from the very beginning, defined professionalization not merely in terms of competency and technically skilled professionals, but more importantly, in terms of "moralization" or an ethical reform of the military. As early as 1919, when announcing his candidacy for the presidency, Obregón provided a detailed analysis of Mexico's critical political situation. One of the most serious problems, he explained, was that many revolutionary generals, having gained wealth and power through abuse of their position, had allied themselves with the "oppressive class" to protect their spoils. In Obregón's words, ". . . many of the most prominent men within the military and civilian ranks have completely corrupted the gains of the revolutionary movement, dedicating all

⁷¹Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*, 99.

their activities to amassing fortunes”⁷² Obregón went on to state that Carranza had tolerated the graft and corruption of the revolutionary generals because he needed their support to achieve his primary goal of defeating Huerta and Villa. In the end, Carranza never did acquire the authority he needed to “moralize” the revolutionary generals, and, therefore, had to leave this difficult but crucial task to a successor.⁷³

Both during his tenure as Carranza’s Secretary of War and then during his own presidency, Obregón devoted considerable energy towards restructuring the military. From an overhaul of the arms production factories, to the reorganization of the military’s health services, to the reduction of military personnel, Obregón clearly understood the importance of structural reforms as part of the overall professionalization of the Mexican military.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Obregón did not consider structural reforms, however necessary, to be the fundamental solution to the problem of a corrupt and rebellious military. For Obregón, only a fundamental ethical reform, or in his words, a “moralization” of the military, and the revolutionary generals in particular, could end this serious threat to Mexico’s future. Although Obregón himself made little headway in the campaign to moralize the military, his belief that such a campaign was necessary, even critical, to the survival of the nation did not fade over time. Towards the end of his presidency, Obregón wrote to General Eugenio Martínez, bluntly detailing his views on the matter:

⁷²“ . . . muchos de los hombres de más relieve dentro del orden military y del orden civil han desvirtuado completamente las tendencias del movimiento revolucionario, dedicando todas sus actividades a improvisar fortunas” *El Demócrata* (Mexico City), June 6, 1919.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴For a detailed examination of Obregón’s reorganization of the military, see Hall, *Alvaro Obregón*, 156-160; Gárfias Magaña, “El Ejército Mexicano de 1913 a 1938,” 424-432 and 448-453; and Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 45-48 and 67-72.

[General Topete's corrupt actions] confirm the extensive conversation I had with you in our last meeting, when I expressed my well-founded fears that the corruption among some of the high-ranking officers of the army, if not forced out in time, will produce, as is natural, a slackening in this institution and a deserved loss of prestige for the national government, and although unable to solve the problem as only a few months remain for me in office, I feel a profound sadness, because I think no government will be able to consolidate itself, be strong, and guarantee the functioning of our institutions, if it has within its own organism the germ of immorality and corruption.

[The extensive corruption] compels me to believe that you need to work with all energy and forget all considerations of friendship and brotherhood, in order to punish with an iron fist corrupt officers who stray from the path of duty and morality and exploit their position . . .

[If urgent action isn't taken], it is assured that one will never be able to end the rebellions . . . since with very rare and honorable exceptions, rich men, mainly hacendados, united with the de la Huerta movement, and now with their money and influence, will surely try to bribe the regional commanders into protecting and defending them, and our army automatically will make common cause with those . . . distanced from the popular classes.

I urge you to read this letter with all thoroughness and remember that the secret of my success during my military and political campaigns resides in the fact that I have never violated the dictates of morality and duty, thereby maintaining a moral force which no one has been able nor will be able to take from me, and on these occasions it is your commander, your old friend and companion, who calls your attention to keep an eye on your subordinates and stop them before they might precipitate a decline into corruption that would carry them to the abyss, and whose acts, although you might be completely distant from them, will necessarily affect your prestige and that of the army in general.⁷⁵

⁷⁵“ . . . este hecho viene a confirmar la extensa conversación que tuve con usted en la última entrevista, cuando le exprese mis temores bien fundados que tengo de que la corrupción de algunos altos jefes del Ejército, si no se conjura a tiempo, produzca, como es natural, un relajamiento en esta Institución y un justo desprestigio para el Gobierno Nacional, y aunque el problema no me toque a mí para su resolución, ya que solo unos cuantos meses me quedan de estar en el poder, no por eso dejo de sentir una profunda pesadumbre, porque considero que ningún Gobierno podrá consolidarse, ser fuerte y garantizar el funcionamiento de nuestras instituciones, si tiene dentro de su propio organismo el germen de la inmoralidad y de la corrupción.

“ . . . me hace creer que usted necesita obrar con toda energía y pasar por encima de todas las consideraciones de amistad y compañerismo, para castigar con mano de acero a los malos militares, que apartándose del camino que les marca el deber y la moral se ponen a explotar su posición . . .

“ . . . es seguro que nunca podrá terminarse con la rebelión . . . pues con muy raras y honrosas excepciones, los hombres de dinero, hacendados principalmente, se unieron al movimiento de la Huertista, y ahora con su dinero y con su influencia tratarán seguramente de cohechar a los Jefes de Sector para que

As Obregón admitted in his letter to Martínez, he never did have much success in controlling the corruption within the military. In fact, scholars have rightly pointed out that Obregón did not seek to stop the corruption, but rather to control it.⁷⁶ Clearly, Obregón's desire to instill a sense of morality within the military was tempered by his cynical but humorous observation that "there is no general able to resist a *cañonazo* (cannonade) of fifty-thousand pesos."⁷⁷ In practice, Obregón doubted the practicality of actually ending military corruption, and thus sought to use the national treasury, which he could better control, as the sole source of enrichment for the generals. Through this process of "functional graft," as one scholar has called it, Obregón ironically sought to control graft by using it.⁷⁸ In addition to functional graft, another strategy that Obregón employed was simply to remove the revolutionary generals from the main sources of graft altogether. Consequently, Obregón issued policies requiring his regional commanders to transfer frequently to prevent them from establishing miniature fiefdoms,

los patrocinen y los defiendan, y nuestro Ejército automáticamente iría haciendo causa común con los . . . distanciándose de las clases populares.

"Le encarezco leer esta carta con todo detenimiento y recordar que el secreto de mis éxitos durante mis campañas militar y política, radica en que nunca he violado los dictados de la moral y de mi deber, conservando así una fuerza moral que nadie ha podido ni podrá despojarme, y que en estas ocasiones es el jefe, el viejo amigo y compañero, el que llama la atención de usted para que vigile a todos los jefes subalternos y los detenga antes de que se precipiten en una pendiente de corrupción que los llevaría hasta el abismo, y de cuyos actos, aunque usted sea completamente ageno a ellos, tendrán que afectar el prestigio de usted y del Ejército en General." Obregón to Martínez, July 4, 1924, AGN/PP, Grupo Obregón-Calles, Caja 3, Expediente 101-M-44.

⁷⁶For example, see Randall Hansis, "The Political Strategy of Military Reform: Alvaro Obregón and Revolutionary Mexico, 1920-1924," *Americas* 36 (October 1979): 207-208; and Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 64-66.

⁷⁷Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 64. Nemesio García Naranjo used a similar phrase ("no hay general que resista un disparo de cincuenta mil pesos") in his article, "El Poder de Amaro," *Hispano-America* (San Francisco, California), January 14, 1930, located in ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 3, Documentos Relativos al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina.

⁷⁸Randall Hansis, "The Political Strategy of Military Reform: Alvaro Obregón and Revolutionary Mexico, 1920-1924," 207.

and sent out circulars exhorting the military during the 1924 election to neither split into factions nor side with political parties in an attempt to influence the elections.⁷⁹

In sum, the close relationship that Obregón and Amaro shared was a relationship forged on the battlefields of Celaya and the plains of northern Mexico and strengthened through the common challenges that they had each encountered as commanders. Both appeared to share a common and mutually reinforcing vision of military reform, with Amaro, as the subordinate, taking special note of the manner in which Obregón approached the problem of a corrupt military. That the two should develop such a close relationship is not surprising. Obregón saw in his young subordinate the epitome of a loyal and disciplined revolutionary general, while Amaro saw in his commanding officer a successful leader who was worthy of his respect and loyalty. Just after becoming president, Obregón wrote Amaro, telling him that he was “one of the colleagues and friends who with deeds has known how to win my esteem and confidence.”⁸⁰ Five years later, while serving as Secretary of War under a new president, Amaro would write Obregón, now officially retired from politics, telling him that “probably the one who most feels your absence is me,” while noting “the distinguished and high esteem that I have always had for you.”⁸¹

⁷⁹George T. Summerlin, Mexico City, NAW, RG 59, M274, 812.00/25890, August 26, 1922; and Obregón to Ejército Nacional, September 22, 1923, AGN/PP, Grupo Obregón -Calles, Caja 7, Expediente 101-R2-E-I.

⁸⁰“ . . . uno de los compañeros y amigos que con hechos han sabido conquistarse mi estimación y confianza.” Obregón to Amaro, January 17, 1921, AGN/PP, Grupo Obregón -Calles, Caja 72, Expediente 213-A-1.

⁸¹“ . . . quien más sienta su ausencia sea yo que además de la distinguida y alta estima en que siempre le he tenido . . . ” Amaro to Obregón, January 31, 1925, ACT-AJA, Serie 0313, Prensa, Expediente 244, Campañas Políticas, Alvaro Obregón, Foja 15.

The de la Huerta Rebellion

As Amaro's Chief of Staff, Colonel José Alvarez spent much of his time in Mexico City carrying out the many tasks Amaro had assigned him. In April 1923, during one of these visits, he was unexpectedly approached by General Enrique Estrada, then serving as the Chief of Military Operations in Jalisco, who casually asked Alvarez to meet with him the following day at the historic Hotel Isabel. Alvarez agreed and the two met in Estrada's hotel rooms as planned. Carefully closing the doors behind him, Estrada announced to Alvarez that he was preparing a rebellion against Obregón, adding that General Guadalupe Sánchez in Veracruz and General Fortunato Maycotte in Oaxaca, as well as several other generals, had all committed to joining the plan. Estrada then ordered Alvarez to tell Amaro of the planned uprising so that Amaro and his army could join them in overthrowing Obregón. Without finishing his assigned tasks, Alvarez immediately left Mexico City to inform Amaro what had taken place. Infuriated at the news, Amaro promptly advised Obregón of the potential uprising.⁸²

The news of the planned rebellion may have come as little surprise to Obregón, for it was no secret that many of the powerful revolutionary generals greatly resented his military reforms and his attempts to curb their political power. Furthermore, Obregón was nearing the end of his term, and it was expected that the most senior divisionarios, Estrada, Sánchez, and Maycotte among them, would begin jockeying for position as Obregón's successor. Not surprisingly then, these same three generals bristled when it

⁸²Luis Monroy Durán, *El último caudillo; apuntes para la historia de México, acerca del movimiento armado de 1923, en contra del gobierno constituido* (México, D.F., 1924), 104-107. Monroy Durán states that Estrada met with Alvarez in April 1922. However, it is much more likely that the meeting took place in 1923, since Obregón's reorganization of the Military Zones, one of Estrada's stated reasons to Alvarez for rebelling, took place in March 1923. Also, no other historical sources corroborate a planned rebellion by Estrada, Sánchez, or Maycotte as early as 1922.

became clear that Obregón had chosen General Plutarco Elías Calles, a divisionario of less seniority and political influence, as the next presidential candidate.⁸³ Obregón, following a somewhat risky strategy, took no overt measures against the suspected generals, waiting instead to see who would remain loyal and who would rebel so as to determine precisely whom his enemies were.⁸⁴

While the revolutionary generals plotted, the political opposition had convinced Obregón's one-time close friend and ex-Minister of Finance, Adolfo de la Huerta, to run for president against Calles. Given Mexico's recent history, however, it may have been unrealistic to expect that the selection of Mexico's next president would be decided other than by force of arms. At the end of 1923, political opposition was at the peak of its national influence and had drafted a powerful figure in the form of de la Huerta with whom to rally their campaign. Perhaps more importantly, de la Huerta was backed by a powerful trio of divisionarios: Estrada, Sánchez, and Maycotte. Furthermore, there was little pretense from either side that the upcoming elections, scheduled for December 1924, would be open and fair. Inevitably, Mexico's next president would be decided on the battlefield, not the ballot box. On the morning of December 5, 1923, de la Huerta, prodded by supporters and somewhat unsure of himself, hesitatingly declared his decision to revolt. "Let's go ahead!" he stated, but then added prophetically, "... it is a bad step that is being taken because it is premature ... I am convinced that this is too rushed."⁸⁵

⁸³Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 72-73

⁸⁴Summerlin, Mexico City, NAW, RG 59, M274, 812.00/26727, December 22, 1923; and Monroy Durán, *El último caudillo*, 107.

⁸⁵"¡Vamos adelante! ... es un mal paso que se da, pues es prematuro ... tengo la convicción de que este es demasiado precipitado." Adolfo de la Huerta, *Memorias de don Adolfo de la Huerta, según su propio dictado* (México: Ediciones Guzmán, 1957), 252. De la Huerta's hesitancy in rebelling is confirmed in Linda B. Hall's account of the rebellion as well. See Linda B. Hall, *Oil, Banks, and Politics:*

De la Huerta had good reason to be hesitant, since the movement suffered from serious weaknesses, most notably the fact that de la Huerta and his three divisionarios were themselves divided. Having very different goals, the divisionarios recognized neither de la Huerta nor each other as leader of the rebellion, and, as a consequence, completely failed to coordinate their military campaigns. In fact, only a common dislike for Obregón held them together.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the rebellion was no minor threat. Obregón faced rebel forces on three fronts—east, south, and west—while the rebel forces comprised more than 100 generals, over 23,000 troops, and some 33,000 irregulars.⁸⁷ To fully comprehend the seriousness of this rebellion, it is important to note that while many generals did not openly support de la Huerta, neither did they declare allegiance to Obregón. Many, in fact, may have simply been waiting to see which side would be victorious before committing themselves either way. Thus, in terms of military forces, Obregón had to rely on the loyalty of several key generals in the northern states and central highlands to deny the rebels access to the border and the oil district, and, most

The United States and Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1917-1924 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 157-158. The most comprehensive treatment of the de la Huerta rebellion in English is David A. Brush's previously cited dissertation, "The De la Huerta Rebellion in Mexico, 1923-1924." See also Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 173-263. For a comprehensive examination of the de la Huerta rebellion in Spanish see Enrique Plasencia de la Parra, *Personajes y escenarios de la rebelión delahuertista, 1923-1924* (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, UNAM, 1998). Brush includes a comprehensive examination of the events leading up to the rebellion, while Plasencia de la Parra focuses primarily on the military campaigns themselves.

⁸⁶Brush, "The De la Huerta Rebellion in Mexico, 1923-1924," 140-145.

⁸⁷Roberto Quiros Martínez, *Alvaro Obregón, Su Vida y Su Obra* (México, D.F., 1928), 196-197. The figures cited represent approximately 20% of the generals and 40% of the troops serving in the Mexican military at the time. See Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 76.

importantly, to take the field and crush the movement. Amaro was one of those generals.⁸⁸

The loyal Federal Army was essentially surrounded on three fronts, but given the disjointed nature of the rebellion, Obregón was able to fight his opponents in stages, dealing first with Sánchez and Maycotte in the east, followed by Estrada in the west, and finally, the remaining rebel forces in the south, central, and southeast. Thus, in terms of deciding who would lead his forces, Obregón had several important decisions to make. For the defense of Mexico City, Obregón assigned General Arnulfo Gómez.⁸⁹ Defending the capital, however, while important, was not a strategy for victory. Only by taking the offensive and crushing the rebel force on the battlefield could Obregón hope to demonstrate the strength of his government and the futility of taking up arms to decide a presidential successor. For that reason, Obregón had to choose generals who would lead his offense-oriented strategy very carefully. To deal with the threat in the east, Obregón chose General Eugenio Martínez, who methodically pushed the rebels eastward towards Puebla and then Veracruz. By early February 1924, Martínez had the rebels on the run. For the next several months Martínez continued his aggressive strategy as he gradually pushed the rebels further south.⁹⁰

With Martínez largely in control of the eastern campaign, Obregón now concentrated on defeating Estrada and his rebel force in the west. For that crucial

⁸⁸Unsigned report, NAW, Record Group 165 (RG 165), Records of the Military Intelligence Division (MID), G-2 Report 2657-G-432/11, Dec 8, 1923; and Hansis, "The Political Strategy of Military Reform," 227.

⁸⁹Brush, "The De la Huerta Rebellion in Mexico, 1923-1924," 151.

⁹⁰Ibid., 182-195, and 200-211; and Plasencia de la Parra, *Personajes y escenarios de la rebelión delahuertista, 1923-1924*, 39-43.

mission, Obregón turned to Amaro.⁹¹ Up till then, Amaro was primarily concerned with pinning down Estrada's forces in the western states of Jalisco and Colima to prevent a move to the center. Amaro now took the offensive, deploying General Lázaro Cárdenas south of Lake Chapala to advance on the rebel forces and split them in two. Cárdenas, however, unexpectedly stumbled into an advance rebel contingent and the ensuing battle gave away his position. Cárdenas defeated the initial challenge, but rebel reinforcements nearly destroyed his forces while Cárdenas himself was severely wounded. Realizing Amaro's plan and the threat to his position, Estrada moved from his temporary base in Morelia to confront Amaro, a move that Amaro blunted with his own advance cavalry column. By late January, the resulting skirmishes between Estrada and Amaro's advance column had pulled the main bodies of both armies further west until they converged on a small town named Ocotlán.⁹²

Amaro and the Battle of Ocotlán: February 8, 1924

Ocotlán is located fifty miles east and slightly south of Guadalajara, just off the northeast corner of Lake Chapala, where it is cradled by a series of rivers. The Santiago River shoots north from Lake Chapala for a mile before angling west.⁹³ Just at the point of the angle, the Zula River begins and curves eastward, the two rivers forming a slightly

⁹¹Hoja de Servicios, 1927, ACT-AJA, Archivo Familiar. According to his service record, Amaro was appointed "Jefe de la Columna de Operaciones Militares sobre Occidente" or Chief of the Military Operations Column in the West on January 1, 1924, and held the position until May 17, 1924.

⁹²Campana Militar Contra la Rebelión "Delahuertista" de diciembre de 1923 a junio de 1924, by Teniente Coronel de Artillería Conrado L. Ruíz, June 1928, ACT-AJA, Serie 0304, Agregados y Estudiantes Militares en el Extranjero, Expediente 42, Coronel Conrado L. Ruíz, Inventario 272, Legajo 1, Fojas 22-26.

⁹³The Santiago River is considered a continuation of the Lerma River, which flows northwest and west through the states of Mexico and Guanajuato and drains into the eastern end of Lake Chapala. For that reason, some sources refer to the Santiago River as the Lerma River.

flattened “Y,” with the town of Ocotlán sitting just inside the top portion of this “Y”. By the time Amaro’s main body of 6000 men reached Ocotlán at the end of January, the rebels, arriving first, had taken a position on the opposite or southwest side of the Santiago River, where they had constructed a series of sophisticated trenches surrounded by barbed wire. Two bridges provided the only means for crossing the river. The first, the Cuitzeo bridge, named for the small town opposite Ocotlán, was located where the Zula and Santiago rivers met, while the second bridge, actually a railroad crossing, was situated about half a mile further northwest. The terrain around Ocotlán was rather flat, but on the opposite side of the Santiago River, where the rebels had dug their trenches, it was more hilly and thus at a higher elevation. The riverbank leading to the rebel position sloped rather abruptly while the banks themselves were marshy. It was clear to Amaro that from a tactical perspective, Estrada held all the advantages. Although Estrada’s force of 1900 men was significantly smaller, he occupied the high ground while his men were protected by a series of trenches ringed with barbed wire. The troops themselves were armed with rifles, approximately eight machine gun emplacements, and adequate ammunition. Furthermore, the rebels had set up strong defenses around the bridgeheads, placing a burned out railcar on the railroad bridge to block any advance. The Santiago River itself was both deep and wide, and any crossing of the river and the marshy and steep embankments could only be made at a considerable cost in lives.⁹⁴

Finding the rebels well entrenched on the opposite bank of the Santiago River, Amaro had his own men dig trenches along it and around Ocotlán to repel a possible

⁹⁴Ibid., Fojas 25-27; Archivo Fernando Torreblanca (hereafter cited as AFT), Fondo 13, Serie 010213, Expediente 15: Estudio de las Operaciones Militares Sobre Ocotlán, Legajo 2/3, Fojas 65-76, Inventario 1082; and Monroy Durán, *El último caudillo*, 163.

rebel offensive. He then ordered protective walls be built around the streets of the city to protect the inhabitants from enemy artillery. He also saw to the construction of observation posts, landing strips for aircraft, repair shops, and hospitals to care for the wounded once the main battle started.⁹⁵ With the rebels just on the other side of the river, constructing trenches was perilous and often deadly. Although divided by the river, the rebel trenches were only 200 yards from Amaro's defenses, well within range of enemy fire. Rebel sharpshooters continuously harassed Amaro's men as they worked, their deadly accuracy evidenced by the many fatalities who died from a bullet through the skull.⁹⁶ Throughout all hours of the day and night, one could hear the constant rifle fire emanating from both sides of the river, and it soon became clear to Amaro and his generals that Estrada was not leaving the battlefield, either to retreat or to attack. If Amaro was going to crush the rebel force, he would have to cross the river and literally dig the enemy out from their well-entrenched fortifications.

As Amaro prepared his men for the inevitable battle, Obregón arrived in Ocotlán to consult with Amaro. It soon became apparent that Obregón, and probably Amaro as well, viewed the situation at Ocotlán from a very different perspective than that of the other generals. Not surprisingly, the generals who would actually make the assault viewed the situation from a tactical perspective. Estrada's forces were protected by trenches, barbed wire, a deep river, and steep embankments. The most obvious plan of attack, a direct assault across the river in broad view of the enemy, would undoubtedly

⁹⁵Campaña Militar Contra la Rebelión "Delahuertista", *ibid.*, Fojas 28, 30.

⁹⁶Monroy Durán, *El último caudillo*, 164.

result in a high number of casualties.⁹⁷ For this reason, various generals recommended several alternatives, such as a cavalry attack from the rear, an attack through a nearby but weakly defended town, or a slower but safer crossing of the river at night.⁹⁸ All were rejected. Obregón was not looking to sweep around Estrada or force him to retreat, but to engage him decisively on the battlefield and crush his army.⁹⁹ While the other options may have been more prudent, Obregón perceived them as taking too long and as certainly less bold. In contrast, Obregón saw not only Estrada's forces at Ocotlán, but also Sánchez's and Maycotte's forces at Veracruz, and understood the strategic significance of crushing the rebellion on both fronts simultaneously. Veracruz and Guadalajara represented the central rebel strongholds in the eastern and western fronts respectively, and with Martínez close to taking Veracruz, a near simultaneous march by Amaro's men into Guadalajara would lead to a general collapse of the entire rebellion nationwide.¹⁰⁰ For Obregón, there was only one way to Guadalajara, and that was through Ocotlán.

⁹⁷Despite the violence and destruction associated with the Mexican Revolution and ensuing civil war, pitched battles with high casualty rates were not characteristic of military combat during this period, Celaya being an obvious exception. The US military attaché in Mexico commented at the time that "neither side [the Federal Army or the rebel force] intends to fight for an advantage which can be gained in any other way. They will move on a town if they think it unoccupied or if they are sure they have more men than the enemy; for they know . . . that if the enemy is equally sure of this numerical superiority, he will move out . . . Actual contact is not [desired] in this game . . . and leading the enemy into a trap is the ambition of most commanders." Cited in Brush, "The De la Huerta Rebellion in Mexico, 1923-1924," 253. The absence of pitched battles with high casualties in 20th-century Mexico and Latin America overall stands in stark contrast to America's experience during the Civil War and that of Europe during World War I.

⁹⁸Juan Gualberto Amaya, *Los gobiernos de Obregón, Calles y regimenes "peleles" derivados del callismo* (México, 1947), 59-60; Amado Aguirre, *Mis memorias de campaña* (México: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1985), 338-340; and Cruz, *Roberto Cruz en la Revolución mexicana*, 86-87.

⁹⁹Amaro, possibly looking to even the score from his previous thrashing at the hands of Estrada's forces at the infamous battle at Cerro de las Vueltas, evidently did nothing to dissuade Obregón from his plan to launch a frontal assault.

¹⁰⁰Enrique Plasencia de la Parra, "La Batalla de Ocotlán," *Boletín* 24 (enero-abril 1997): 9, 13.

It was now February 8, 1924, and over a week had passed since the two armies had arrived in Ocotlán. As evening fell on the small town, Obregón called Amaro and his generals for one last meeting. Having dismissed previous suggestions for alternative attack routes, the only real issue was exactly how Amaro's forces would cross the river. Anticipating the decision for a frontal assault, Amaro placed 900 men on his left flank, near the Cuitzeo bridge, while another force of 1200 a half a mile further up the Santiago River faced the railroad bridge. Amaro deployed a main force of 1700 men another half a mile further up the river, just beyond the rebel's extreme left flank, where the main assault would actually take place. To cross the river, Obregón ordered the construction of several rafts, essentially wooden planks strung together and held afloat by automobile inner tubes, capable of carrying about ten men. At the meeting, Obregón and Amaro briefed their battalion commanders on the final plan of attack. The first group of 900 men near the Cuitzeo bridge would open the battle with machine gun fire on the enemy positions directly in front, pinning them down and preventing them from supporting other rebel positions, while the second group of 1200 men would perform the same mission at the railroad bridge. Both groups would advance only if conditions were favorable. The third group of 1700 men, under the command of General Roberto Cruz, would carry out the main assault by using the rafts to cross the river.¹⁰¹ They would then assault the enemy's extreme left flank and rear and sweep the enemy from the field. Prior to the frontal assault, Amaro would order his cavalry to attack the nearby town of Poncitlán to

¹⁰¹Like Obregón, Calles, and many other revolutionary generals, Cruz hailed from the state of Sonora. An imposing general with a reputation as a tough fighter, perhaps originating from his Yaqui Indian heritage, Cruz went into battle with a large bandanna tied over his head, very much in the style of Mexico's famous hero of the independence movement, José María Morelos. Like many revolutionary generals who once fought at Amaro's side, Cruz would later join the rebel cause during the ill-fated 1929 Escobar rebellion. Sometime prior to this, however, Cruz would have his celebrated run-in with Amaro and his riding crop, as recounted in Chapter II.

prevent any reinforcements from reaching the rebels. Artillery, located at the rear of the center group, would remain under Amaro's control and place their fire at his direction. With Amaro's aircraft flying observation missions and scouting enemy positions, all was ready for the final assault.¹⁰² Before the meeting broke, Obregón gave Amaro and his generals their final orders, "Upon daybreak, cross the river, no matter what the cost."¹⁰³

At 7:00 AM that next morning, Cruz's troops began their first perilous attempts to do just that. About twenty men from General Helidorio Charis' battalion of Mayo Indians leapt into the water in an attempt to swim to the other side, but the rebels noticed Charis' movements and the entire line on both sides erupted in fire.¹⁰⁴ Amaro's artillery pummeled the rebel lines but not enough to lessen the steady stream of rifle and machine gun fire that riddled Charis' men and pinned them down. Cruz then ordered one of his staff officers, Captain J. Carmen Díaz, to string a cable to the other side of the river, which the men on the raft would then use to pull themselves across. Clenching the cable in his mouth, Díaz dove into the water under a hail of bullets, came up for air, and then dove again as more bullets whizzed by. Remarkably, Díaz made it safely ashore, and after fastening the cable to a tree, Cruz's men began pulling themselves across in their makeshift rafts, taking heavy casualties as they crossed. Meanwhile, Charis ordered one of his machine gun placements to the riverbank to provide covering fire for two of his

¹⁰²Campaña Militar Contra la Rebelión "Delahuertista", *ibid.*, Fojas 30-31; and Estudio de las Operaciones Militares Sobre Ocotlán, *ibid.*

¹⁰³Fernando Ramírez de Aguilar, *Desde el tren amarillo, crónicas de guerra* (México: Botas., 1924), 83.

¹⁰⁴It is not completely clear if only Mayo Indians were involved in the river crossing. The official battle report identifies elements of the 2nd Regional Mayo Battalion as making the crossing, while Cruz, in his memoirs, states that the crossing was made by both Mayo and Juchitec Indians. In his dissertation, Brush mentions both Mayo and Yaqui Indians in his description of the river crossing.

men as they replicated Díaz's heroic feat. As more men poured across to the other side the fighting grew furious, with men falling dead and wounded into the water, the blood turning the water a dark red color. Amaro's artillery continued to batter the rebel lines while Federal aircraft buzzed overhead at less than 300 feet, dropping bombs as they flew over the enemy.¹⁰⁵

While Cruz fought a desperate battle, Amaro's troops stationed along the southern most point of the river pinned down the rebels as planned, but did not dare attempt a crossing of the Cuitzeo bridge. Further upriver, at the railroad bridge, an armored railway car full of Amaro's men came close to reaching the other side, but was stopped before it could successfully cross. Cruz personally crossed the river at 3:00 that afternoon to direct the final offensive, as Amaro ordered his reserves to reinforce the main attack.¹⁰⁶ Gradually, the momentum swung in favor of Amaro as enough of Cruz's men made it to the other side to initiate an assault on the trenches. Moving his men steadily forward until they maneuvered to a position nearly behind the rebel trenches, Cruz launched his attack at about 4:00, and began to flank the rebels as planned.¹⁰⁷ Amaro then led his men across the Cuitzeo bridge as the rebel force began a general retreat. In spite of the horrific scene that had unfolded in front of him throughout the day,

¹⁰⁵Monroy Durán, *El último caudillo*, 159-160 and 164-166; Cruz, *Roberto Cruz en la Revolución mexicana*, 86-88; Estudio de las Operaciones Militares Sobre Ocotlán, *ibid.*, Fojas 89-91; and Ramírez de Aguilar, *Desde el tren amarillo*, 81.

¹⁰⁶During the assault, Cruz had two horses shot out from under him, and was himself slightly wounded by a bullet that grazed his testicle. Naturally, Cruz's injury was the cause of much joking. Upon hearing of Cruz's wound, Obregón was said to have quipped, "They had to hit that boy there, it's what makes him so bulky." Obregón's exact words were, "¡Tenían que pegarle ahí a ese muchacho, es lo que más le abulta!" See Cruz, *Roberto Cruz en la Revolución mexicana*, 88-89.

¹⁰⁷Campaña Militar Contra la Rebelión "Delahuertista", *ibid.*, Fojas 33-36; Estudio de las Operaciones Militares Sobre Ocotlán, *ibid.*, Fojas 95-96; Monroy Durán, *El último caudillo*, 165-166; and Cruz, *Roberto Cruz en la Revolución mexicana*, 87-88.

Amaro reported the results of the battle to Obregón with seemingly cold indifference:

“We have already crossed the river with stupendous tranquility. In a moment, this will all be over. The only thing is that it was very bloody.”¹⁰⁸ By 8:00 that evening, twelve hours after it had started, the battle of Ocotlán had ended. The road to Guadalajara was now open.

Ocotlán: Aftermath

While Obregón hailed the dangerous crossing of the Santiago River as “the highest example of valor and honor that could be demanded of our army,” the victory at Ocotlán came at a steep price.¹⁰⁹ The official government reports estimated Federal casualties at somewhere between 300 – 400, yet subsequent press and private reports put Federal losses at a much larger figure, some as high as 2000.¹¹⁰ Ocotlán was in fact reminiscent of Celaya, except that it was now Amaro who attacked a well-entrenched army, and, consequently, it was Amaro who suffered tremendous losses. By nightfall of February 9, the day of the river crossing, the hotels in Ocotlán served as hospitals to accommodate the wounded, while the dead soldiers, many still covered in a darkish mud

¹⁰⁸“Ya pasamos el río, dijo con estupenda tranquilidad. Hace un momento se acabó esto. Sólo que fué muy sangriento.” Ramírez de Aguilar, *Desde el tren amarillo*, 86; and Monroy Durán, *El último caudillo*, 166.

¹⁰⁹“... el más alto ejemplo que puede exigirse al valor y lealtad de nuestro Ejército, lo han dado nuestros soldados leales al forzar el paso del río Lerma.” Monroy Durán, *El último caudillo*, 170.

¹¹⁰Estudio de las Operaciones Militares Sobre Ocotlán, *ibid.*, Fojas 65-76; and Summerlin, Mexico City, NAW, RG 59, M274, 812.00/27029, February 15, 1924. Rebel losses are much more difficult to determine. Summerlin reported rebel losses at 4000 killed, wounded, and taken prisoner, an impossibility given that the total rebel force was estimated at 1900 men. See *ibid.*, 812.00/27028, February 16, 1924. In contrast, the official battle report, cited above, states that Estrada’s forces suffered relatively few casualties—apparently less than the 300-400 casualties the Federal Army claimed to have suffered—but were forced to consume a great deal of their reserve ammunition, thus making it impossible for Estrada to mount another sustained offensive.

from the crossing, were laid out haphazardly in the main entrance to the town, a lit candle placed by each head. Those arriving at the main entrance were immediately struck by a macabre sight: scattered rows of dead soldiers surrounded by an eerie, reddish glow from the candlelight reflecting off the small pools of blood still surrounding each body. The intermittent weeping of indigenous women mourning their dead only added to the evening's eerie mood. Obregón visited the wounded in the makeshift hospitals and arranged for a train to begin transporting them to more adequate facilities in Mexico City and other towns.¹¹¹ The first trainload arrived in Mexico City with over 250 wounded, and as each successive delivery arrived with more wounded over the next several days, it was soon obvious that the victory at Ocotlán had indeed come at a heavy price.¹¹²

Ocotlán marked a critical turning point in the de la Huerta rebellion. As Obregón aptly stated a few days after Amaro's victory, "The rebellion has not terminated, but it is in its last agony."¹¹³ For the rebels, the agony never more obvious than on February 11, 1924, the date that General Martínez occupied the headquarters of rebel leaders Adolfo de la Huerta and Guadalupe Sánchez in the port city of Veracruz, or the very next day, when Amaro marched his army unopposed into General Estrada's base of operations in Guadalajara.¹¹⁴ Quite perceptively, the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires reported that Obregón's return to Mexico City a mere six days after the battle of Ocotlán "had an appearance of finality and carried with it a suggestion that the further development of the campaign

¹¹¹Ramírez de Aguilar, *Desde el tren amarillo*, 87-88; and Monroy Durán, *El último caudillo*, 169-170.

¹¹²Summerlin, Mexico City, NAW, RG 59, M274, 812.00/27029, February 15, 1924.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 812.00/25056, February 23, 1924.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 812.00/27029, February 15, 1924; and *ibid.*, 812.00/27028, February 16, 1924.

against the rebellion would not necessitate his [Obregón's] personal attention."¹¹⁵ After the fall of Veracruz and Guadalajara, Sánchez barely escaped capture as he fled on horseback, while Estrada left the country altogether. As Amaro continued his march through western and southwestern Mexico, Martínez continued his pursuit of General Maycotte and his supporters south into Oaxaca, where he and several other rebel generals were eventually captured and executed. By May 1924, the de la Huerta rebellion had moaned its last agonizing gasps and died.¹¹⁶ By defeating Estrada at Ocotlán, Amaro had really opened two roads. While the first led to Guadalajara and the rebellion's eventual defeat, the second led to a peaceful election and a Calles presidency.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 812.00/25056, February 23, 1924.

¹¹⁶Brush, "The De la Huerta Rebellion in Mexico, 1923-1924," 200-211, 246-250, and 273-285; and Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 241-263. Both Sánchez and de la Huerta eventually fled to the U.S.

CHAPTER IV
LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR A NEW ARMY:
AMARO AS SECRETARY OF WAR

With the de la Huerta rebellion firmly defeated, Calles resumed the formality of relaunching his presidential campaign, although few doubted who the victor would be. The elections took place in July, and, as expected, Calles won the presidency in a landslide victory over his opponent by a vote of 1,360,634 to 250,500.¹ Ocotlán served as a critical milestone for Amaro's career as well, for it launched him into the most coveted position within the military, that of Secretary of War. Calles was inaugurated president in November 1924, but the Secretary of War position had remained unoccupied since September, when Obregón had transferred Secretary of War General Francisco Serrano to Europe on a diplomatic mission. Amaro undoubtedly believed that he was in the running to fill the vacant post, for as far back as 1921, when General Enrique Estrada had served in that role, Amaro already knew of the many rumors tapping him as Estrada's successor.² Thus, it must have come as somewhat of a surprise to Amaro that upon Calles' inauguration as President on November 30, he appointed Amaro as his Undersecretary of War, leaving the top position unoccupied.³

¹Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 264-265.

²Alvarez to Amaro, May 18, 1921, ACT-AJA, Serie 0101, Estado Mayor y Cuerpo Auxiliar, Expediente 3, Coronel José Alvarez, Inventario 3, Legajo 3, Foja 131.

³AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 4, Foja 1737; and Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 269. Amaro's service record shows that he officially stepped down from his position as Chief of the

Why did Calles not appoint Amaro as Secretary of War outright? The answer is not clear. Initially, Obregón had considered appointing Amaro to succeed Serrano back in September but then decided against such a move. Obregón feared that once Calles took over the presidency, others would perceive Amaro as someone whom Obregón had imposed on his successor, a perception that would surely diminish Amaro's effectiveness.⁴ In addition, two other powerful divisionarios, Generals Eugenio Martínez and Arnulfo Gómez, who had both fought valiantly during the de la Huerta rebellion, were also under consideration for the top post.⁵ In light of the recent uprising, both Obregón and Calles may have found it prudent to delay any announcement of Amaro as the new Secretary of War until they had secured both generals' support. Finally, the fact that Calles did not appoint anyone else as Secretary of War meant that even as Undersecretary, Amaro would effectively occupy the top military position.

Regardless of the reason for the delay, both Obregón and Calles clearly held Amaro in high esteem. Since 1915, when Amaro joined Obregón's Constitutionalist Army and lent his critical support at the second battle of Celaya, until the most recent battle at Ocotlán, where he demonstrated his considerable military leadership and organizational skills, Amaro had proved himself to be both loyal and competent. Furthermore, Amaro's attempts at educating and professionalizing his troops clearly demonstrated his desire to reform the military, a top priority for both Obregón and Calles. Any further speculation about the delay ended on July 27, 1925, when Calles named

Military Operations Column in the West on May 17, 1924. From that time until his appointment as Undersecretary of War, he served as the Chief of Military Concentration Camps in the Bajío.

⁴Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*, 119.

⁵Ibid.

Amaro as Secretary of War, a position he would hold for an unprecedented six-and-a-half-year period.⁶

The State of the Mexican Military

When Amaro assumed the office of Secretary of War in 1925, he was painfully aware that the Mexican military was neither unified nor professional. The de la Huerta rebellion, which saw no less than 102 generals rise up against Obregón, clearly attested to the great divisions within the military. Possessing little awareness of institutional loyalty or duty to the government, these generals commanded independent, personal armies, which meant they could support particular administrations, rebel against others, desert former allies, and create new alliances with one-time enemies, all on a personal whim. Perhaps the most celebrated example of this situation came with the case of Colonel Cecilio Luna. Luna had been part of Villa's army when he died during the raid on Columbus, New Mexico in 1916. In going through the dead colonel's personal effects, an American official found papers showing that Luna had fought for Francisco I. Madero against Porfirio Díaz, for General Pascual Orozco against Madero, for Obregón against Orozco, for General Benjamín Hill against General Victoriano Huerta, for General José María Maytorena against Hill, and for Villa against Obregón.⁷ Although nearly ten years had passed between Luna's exploits and Amaro's appointment as Secretary of War, very little had changed in terms of unifying and professionalizing the military.

⁶AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 4, Foja 1737. At the time, the position of Secretary of War included command of all military forces, both army and navy, with the air force comprising a branch of the army. Amaro's official title was Secretario de Guerra y Marina, or Secretary of War and Navy.

⁷Cobb, El Paso, Texas, NAW, *ibid.*, 812.00/17571, March 22, 1916, cited in Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 33.

“I have the high honor of disavowing Alvaro Obregón”:
Disloyalty and the Mexican Military

Despite Obregón’s widespread use of “functional graft” as a strategy for controlling his generals, it was painfully obvious that such measures had not provided the desired effect.⁸ The defections by Guadalupe Sánchez, Fortunato Maycotte, and Enrique Estrada during the de la Huerta rebellion served as excellent illustrations of just how limited Obregón’s fifty-thousand peso “cannonades” and promotions were when it came to buying loyalty. Even promotion to an elite group of the army’s highest ranking officers proved insufficient to ensure their loyalty, since all three generals had received their rank of *divisionario* as a reward for supporting Obregón instead of Carranza during the 1920 Agua Prieta rebellion.⁹ The irony of Sánchez’s promotion after the 1920 uprising is particularly evident in the fact that he had initially proclaimed his undying loyalty to Carranza, not Obregón. Furthermore, it was Sánchez’s control of Veracruz that persuaded Carranza to flee there, and thus his unexpected treachery left Carranza without a refuge.¹⁰ Lastly, Sánchez had been the protégé of General Cándido Aguilar, a staunch carrancista, and thus his pronouncement for Obregón in 1920 appears purely opportunistic. In the end, it probably came as little surprise to Obregón, who knew well that if Sánchez could so easily turn on his benevolent patron Aguilar in 1920, the fickle general would have little compunction in joining de la Huerta in 1923.

⁸Randall Hansis, “The Political Strategy of Military Reform: Alvaro Obregón and Revolutionary Mexico, 1920-1924,” 207.

⁹The reader may recall that Amaro had received his promotion to *divisionario* under the same circumstances. Other generals promoted to *divisionario* at this time were Martínez, Calles, Francisco Cosío Robelo, Francisco Coss, and Eulalio Gutiérrez. See Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 69-70.

¹⁰Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 38.

While Sánchez was one of the first to openly support de la Huerta, Maycotte brazenly professed his supposed loyalty to Obregón until the last possible moment. On December 6, 1923, one day after Sánchez had declared his support for de la Huerta from his headquarters in Veracruz, Maycotte arrived in Mexico City to meet with Obregón and reassure the president of his loyalty. Soon after the meeting, Maycotte paid a visit to General Serrano, then serving as Secretary of War. According to General Juan Gualberto Amaya, who was present during the meeting, Maycotte stated the following:

I have come from a lengthy conference with the President and upon its conclusion he suggested that I pass by to meet with you, as you have already been given the corresponding instructions. I have completed all my affairs, and the ammunition, military uniforms, and other war munitions that they have provided me have already shipped, and all that remains is for me to march to Oaxaca to combat the traitors [Sánchez's forces] from Veracruz.¹¹

Following Obregón's instructions, Serrano then ordered one of the officers on his staff to escort Maycotte to the National Treasury where the general would receive \$100,000 pesos to cover expenses related to his upcoming battle against Sánchez. As soon as Maycotte left the office, Serrano turned to Amaya, and, with a smile on his lips, stated, "This Maycotte very soon will second Guadalupe Sánchez, in spite of the resources that the government has just delivered to him, trusting in his protests of support and in his objective of attending to the needs of the campaign [against Sánchez] that he

¹¹"He conferenciado largamente con el señor Presidente y al terminar me indicó que pasara a entrevistarle a usted, a quien ya había dado las instrucciones correspondientes. Todos mis asuntos los tengo terminados y ya están embarcados el parque, vestuario y demás pertrechos de guerra que me han sido proporcionados, y solo me resta marchar a Oaxaca para batir inmediatamente a los traidores de Veracruz." Amaya, *Los gobiernos de Obregón, Calles y regimenes "peleles" derivados del callismo*, 35-36.

spoke of.”¹² Serrano’s words proved prophetic. On the very next day, Maycotte marched into Oaxaca and promptly declared himself in rebellion against Obregón.¹³

In spite of Sánchez’ and Maycotte’s treasonous actions, it may have been Estrada’s defection that most bothered Obregón. Estrada and Obregón had enjoyed a close friendship that stretched back to the early days of the Agua Prieta rebellion. When Obregón sent out his call to begin the armed struggle against Carranza, Estrada was one of the first he notified, and Estrada reciprocated by being one of the first to declare his support for Obregón.¹⁴ Upon assuming the presidency, Obregón had enough confidence in Estrada to name him Secretary of War, hoping that perhaps he had found someone who could implement his much-needed military reform program.¹⁵ Relations between the two gradually worsened over the years, however, and while Obregón took careful note of rumors concerning Estrada’s plans to rebel, he continued to give his once-close friend every opportunity to express his loyalty. In the final months of 1923, Obregón paid several visits to Estrada in Jalisco, where he hosted dinners on behalf of Estrada, who, as the guest of honor, repeatedly and very publicly professed his unswerving loyalty. Nevertheless, only a few days following de la Huerta’s call to overthrow Obregón, Estrada sent his once-close friend a stinging letter in which he seconded his support for

¹²“Este Maycotte muy pronto secundará a Guadalupe Sánchez, a pesar de los elementos que el Gobierno acaba de entregarle confiado en sus protestas de adhesión y con el objeto de que atienda las necesidades de la campaña de que nos habla.” Ibid., 36.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 28, 33.

¹⁵General Benjamín Hill was Obregón’s first secretary of war, but after serving only two weeks in office, he became ill and died unexpectedly. See *ibid.*, 109-110.

de la Huerta, and then added, “I have the high honor of disavowing Alvaro Obregón.”¹⁶

Obregón, barely able to contain his anger, immediately fired back:

During my stay in El Fuerte, Jalisco, barely a few days ago, you would make at least two visits a week to visit me; and you would stay in my very own house, and you would sit at my table in the place of honor, having invited me in one of your most recent visits to be the best man at your wedding, and when an imprudent journalist announced that a military plot was being prepared, naming some of your units as disloyal, I denied with irritation . . . what I considered to be a slander. . . . My fault lies in having held you in esteem more than you deserved, and in having believed in your military honor and in your discretion as a gentleman.¹⁷

While any discussion of the de la Huerta revolt and the serious problem of disloyal generals would naturally focus on Sánchez, Maycotte, and Estrada, it should not obscure the fact that Obregón and Calles had to consider nearly every top-level general suspect until events proved otherwise. The case of General Eugenio Martínez, whom Obregón eventually chose to lead his eastern campaign, serves as an excellent example. According to Secretary of War Serrano, as news of the de la Huerta rebellion and the large number of defections reached Obregón, the lack of any confirmation of loyalty from Martínez left Obregón extremely discouraged. Like Estrada, Martínez enjoyed an extremely close and long-lasting relationship with the President. Back in 1912, when a young Lieutenant Colonel Obregón took command of the newly-formed Fourth Irregular Battalion of Sonora, it was then Captain Martínez, the one man in the unit with military

¹⁶“Tengo el alto honor de desconocer a Alvaro Obregón.” Letter dated December 7, 1923 from Estrada to Obregón, reprinted in Amaya, *Los gobiernos de Obregón, Calles y regimenes “peleles” derivados del callismo*, 36-37.

¹⁷“Durante mi estancia en El Fuerte, Jal., hace apenas unos cuantos días, Ud. hacía cuando menos dos viajes por semana para visitarme; y se alojaba en mi misma casa, y ocupaba en mi mesa el sitio de honor, habiéndome invitado en una de sus últimas visitas para padrino de su boda, y cuando un periodista imprudente, anunció que se preparaba un complot militar señalando a algunos Cuerpos de los suyos desleales, yo desmentí con irritación . . . lo que consideré una calumnia. . . . La culpa mía radica en haber estimado a Ud. más de lo que merecía, y en haber creído en su honor militar y en su delicadeza de caballero.” Letter dated December 8, 1923 from Obregón to Estrada, reprinted in *ibid.*, 38-39.

experience, who drilled Obregón's army of 300 farmers in military tactics.¹⁸ "Who was going to tell us that even General Eugenio Martínez would turn his back on me!" lamented Obregón to his Secretary of War.¹⁹ However, upon receiving news that Martínez did not join the rebels, Obregón's mood changed instantly, and a reenergized President immediately began planning his campaign against de la Huerta.²⁰

Compounding the problem of disloyalty within the officer corps was the fact that Obregón and Calles simply had no guarantee that those generals who remained loyal during one rebellion would stay faithful through the next. The highly politicized nature of the general officer corps made it virtually inevitable that the constant intrigue and shifting alliances that so readily characterized Mexican politics would find their parallel among the military generals. As a case in point, Generals Serrano and Gómez, who both served loyally during the de la Huerta rebellion, instigated a rebellion several years later during the Calles administration.²¹ With Serrano in Morelos and Gómez in Veracruz, the two generals conspired with the local garrison commander in Mexico City to seize Obregón, Calles, and Amaro while they reviewed a military exercise set to take place at Balbuena Field the evening of October 2, 1927. The seizure of the nation's three most powerful men would thus serve as the spark that would ignite the entire revolt. To drive home the point of just how fragile loyalties could be, the garrison commander in Mexico

¹⁸Hall, *Alvaro Obregón*, 29-30; and Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 4-5.

¹⁹"¿Quién iba a decirnos que hasta el General Eugenio Martínez me diera la espalda." Cited in Plasencia de la Parra, *Personajes y escenarios de la rebelión delahuertista, 1923-1924*, 43.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹During the de la Huerta rebellion, Serrano served as Obregón's secretary of war, while Gómez took charge of defending the capital from rebel forces. Although Serrano's and Gómez's rebellion in 1927 took place while Calles was still in office, the primary motivation for the uprising was not to overthrow Calles, but to prevent Obregón's inevitable reelection to the presidency. See Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 332-361; and Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 95-99.

City who conspired with Serrano and Gómez was none other than General Martínez, the very man who had trained Obregón's Fourth Battalion and who had led the eastern campaign against de la Huerta.²²

To a certain extent, the de la Huerta rebellion had given Obregón a perfect opportunity to identify dissension within the military and eliminate the most disloyal generals via battle, execution, or exile. Fellow divisionarios, such as Estrada, Sánchez, and Maycotte, all of whom had supported Obregón during the Agua Prieta rebellion of 1920, but who had then supported de la Huerta in 1923, were now gone. Simply stated, Amaro would not have to worry about the loyalty of these generals or use "functional graft" to pacify them as Obregón had done. In a very efficient, albeit violent, manner, Obregón's victory over the rebels helped lay the groundwork for real institutional reform by purging from the military those generals who were most prone to resist such measures. Nevertheless, the expulsion of disloyal generals who sided with de la Huerta during the rebellion did not serve as a panacea for the ills of the military. Aside from Amaro and a mere handful of genuinely loyal generals, many others simply remained on the sidelines, waiting to see whether or not Obregón would triumph. Others who did rebel quickly reversed their position once it became clear that not enough of their fellow officers would join them. Ultimately, while victory over the rebels meant the elimination of many disloyal generals, it also led to the creation of fifty-four new generals and the promotion

²²Various accounts of the incident state that Obregón, Calles, and Amaro had all learned of Martínez's complicity in the rebellion beforehand. In addition, just days before the planned seizure, Martínez apparently had second thoughts and informed Calles of the plot. As a result, Calles immediately relieved Martínez of command and shipped him off to an assignment in Europe. On the day of the scheduled military exercise, only Amaro, surrounded by a strong contingent of guards, attended the event, and thus the seizure never took place. In the end, the poorly organized rebellion quickly faltered, resulting in the capture and execution of both Serrano and Gómez. See Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 345-346; Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*, 159-161; and Rafael Loyola Díaz, *La crisis Obregón-Calles y el Estado mexicano* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1980), 67-68.

of thirty-three existing generals to the next higher rank. With no guarantee that these new generals would prove any more loyal than the ones they replaced, Obregón continued to seduce them with his fifty-thousand peso “cannonades,” new automobiles, and other benefits.²³ As one historian cynically observed, “Most of the loyalty he [Obregón]—and the nation—got, he paid for.”²⁴

“Shoot General and Licenciado Francisco Treviño”:
Lawlessness and the Mexican Military

Unfortunately for Amaro, the unprofessional nature of the military he inherited upon assuming the office of Secretary of War did not end with the problem of disloyalty. In fact, the second serious dilemma confronting Amaro—the lack of military discipline and the widespread belief that officers, especially generals, were immune from the law—may have been directly related to the general absence of institutional loyalty that so characterized the Mexican military during this period. Conceivably, one could have anticipated such problems, for the revolutionary armies that emerged from the shattered remnants of Porfirio Díaz’s Federal Army hardly resembled their professional, well-trained counterparts in such nations as France and Germany. Despite their demonstrated skill in defeating Díaz and Huerta, the revolutionary armies existed as a loose confederation of hastily organized and poorly disciplined private armies. Troops drawn from almost every conceivable social and economic class comprised these armies, while self-appointed generals with little, if any, formal military training typically commanded

²³Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, 322.

²⁴*Ibid.*

them.²⁵ In addition, any inclination Mexico's political and military leadership may have had for implementing a systematic process to control officer promotions never surfaced once the Revolution broke out. Hundreds of officers promoted to general during the years 1913-1915, the most intense period of fighting, earned the moniker *generales de dedo* (finger generals), since they received their promotion during battle at the point of a finger from their commander.²⁶ While skilled and talented officers such as Amaro did rise through the ranks based on genuine merit, Obregón also felt compelled to promote many officers to the rank of general simply for not rebelling, as seen in the aftermath of the de la Huerta revolt.

One obvious result of this informal and irregular promotion system was the large number of generals that swelled the ranks of the Mexican officer corps, a number far greater than that which the Mexican military genuinely needed. According to one observer, there were more generals in the Mexican Army in 1919 than allied generals at any time during World War I.²⁷ By 1927, not much had changed: Mexico had one general for every 335 men, compared with Italy's 1157, France's 1662, and the United State's 1755.²⁸ However, another more serious consequence of the military's unrestrained promotion system was the overall lack of discipline and lawlessness that pervaded the general officer corps. The sheer number of generals made it difficult for the leadership to control and police their actions, while the exaggerated prestige and power

²⁵Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, 308-309.

²⁶Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 87.

²⁷Charles Wilson Hackett, "The New Regime in Mexico," *Southwestern Political Science Quarterly* II, no. 1 (June 1921): 70.

²⁸Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, 330.

such rank carried naturally enticed many generals to abuse their position and take part in corruption. Not surprisingly then, many of Obregón's most powerful generals were also among his most corrupt and ruthless. General Sánchez, for example, reportedly received 50,000 pesos and an expensive car for the murder of a fellow general, while his forces during the 1920 Agua Prieta revolt earned the title of "Broom Brigade," as they stole all they could cart off during the campaign.²⁹ During his term as secretary of war, General Serrano incurred a gambling debt of \$80,000 in one night and then paid it using funds from the National Treasury.³⁰ Lastly, the US military attaché in Mexico reported that General Gómez "engaged in every form of graft and hold-up, from partnership with bandits to ownership of houses of prostitution and commercial concerns operated largely with soldier personnel."³¹

Of course, lesser-known generals, such as General Juan Carrasco, who earned a reputation of being the general "who fixes everything with a revolver in his hand," proved just as prone as the more powerful divisionarios to lawlessness and abuse of power.³² The journalist Ernest Gruening, writing in the late 1920s, recorded several such incidents that exemplified the manner in which military officers routinely thwarted the law with impunity.³³ On one occasion in 1925, the regional commander in Aguascalientes, General Rodrigo Talamantes, used his forces at the behest of large landholders to drive peasants from their *ejidos* or communal lands. When the local

²⁹Brush, "The De la Huerta Rebellion in Mexico, 1923-1924," 41.

³⁰Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, 320.

³¹Summerlin, Mexico City, NAW, *ibid.*, 812.00/25836, August 8, 1922.

³²Chapman, Mazatlán, NAW, *ibid.*, 812.00/23209, November 10, 1919.

³³Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, 324-327.

villagers sought justice from Talamantes, the general had several of them shot. In 1926, another general ordered his troops to rob a local rancher of his most prized bulls as a favor for a local bullfighter, arresting the rancher and jailing him in the process. According to Gruening, getting thrown in jail entailed many risks, as release was often predicated upon paying anywhere from 500 to 2500 pesos for “legal fees.” Those who could pay their way out certainly considered themselves more fortunate than those found dead in their cells with a gun in their hand and a bullet through their skull. While the legal system officially ruled such cases as “suicides,” most understood that these “suicides” merely reflected the extra-legal measures the generals employed when implementing their own version of justice.

Insubordinate generals by no means found themselves alone in using violence and extra-legal measures, as Obregón and those acting under his orders found executions in the guise of summary courts martial a handy instrument for ridding the nation of those generals identified as a significant threat. In one notable case, which blended the comic elements of the general de dedo promotion system with the tragic features of the summary court martial, a young *licenciado* (lawyer) who had taken part in the de la Huerta rebellion came to the attention of Secretary of War Serrano. “They can’t shoot me,” protested Licenciado Francisco Treviño to his captors, “I’m not in the military; the [legal] code does not authorize the death penalty for insurrection [in the case of civilians].”³⁴ Seeing that the young lawyer was correct, Serrano issued an order for immediate publication: “On this date, the grade of General of the Army is awarded to

³⁴“A mí no me pueden fusilar; no soy militar; el código no señala pena de muerte para la insurrección.” José Vasconcelos, *El desastre*, 273.

Licenciado Francisco Treviño.” A second order annexed to the first then stated, “Shoot General and Licenciado Francisco Treviño.”³⁵

Unfortunately, such incidents were not limited to the period surrounding the de la Huerta rebellion. In 1922, two editorials appeared simultaneously in the Mexico City newspaper *El Universal* that effectively summarized the sense of anarchy and distrust pervading the military as well as the nation in general. One editorial reflected the fear that the Mexican government could not control military forces in the outlying areas and warned of the alarming increase in “colonels who rise up” and “rebellious squads.” At the same time, a second editorial lamented the government’s propensity to use firing squads when dispatching justice to unruly and rebellious generals. “Will the firing squad and only the firing squad be our sole instrument of justice?” the author of the editorial asked rhetorically. “Enough of horror and enough of blood! Let us realize that clemency has always been a sign of strength!”³⁶

If not the government’s sole instrument of justice, summary courts martial and the inevitable executions that followed certainly remained popular, particularly in instances of treason. In June 1921, a summary court martial ordered General Fernando Vizcaíno’s execution on the grounds of sedition less than twenty-four hours after his arrest, while a fellow conspirator was shot as he attempted to flee, a euphemism for an execution without the formalities of a trial.³⁷ One of the more extreme cases of such executions

³⁵“Con fecha de hoy, se concede el grado de general del Ejército al Licenciado Francisco Treviño. Fusile al General y Licenciado Francisco Treviño.” Ibid., 273-274.

³⁶“¿Será el fusil y únicamente el fusil nuestro único instrumento de justicia? . . . ¡Basta de horror y basta de sangre! Sepamos que la clemencia ha sido siempre signo de la fortaleza!” *El Universal* (Mexico City), February 14, 1922.

³⁷Summerlin, Mexico City, NAW, ibid., 812.00/25053, June 25, 1921. According to Mexican law, officials had the right to shoot prisoners attempting to escape. This law, known in Spanish as the *ley*

took place near the border town of Laredo, Texas, in June 1922. While the exact details are not clear, it appears that on the evening of June 7, 1922, American agents working for the Mexican military kidnapped General Lucio Blanco and another man, both suspected of treason, shortly after they left their hotel in Laredo. The agents then transported their captives across the border, where they handed them over to the Mexican authorities. By dawn of the following day, the lifeless bodies of Blanco and his companion were found handcuffed together floating in the Rio Grande.³⁸ Overall, Blanco's murder was just one of at least five separate instances between March and August 1922 in which Mexican military officials, mostly through summary courts martial, ordered the execution of no less than sixteen officers on suspicion of rebellion.³⁹

Amaro's Unique War Experiences

The overarching problems of disloyalty and lawlessness that pervaded the Mexican military, plus the problems stemming from the chaotic nature of the Mexican Revolution that gave birth to these revolutionary armies, presented Amaro with a nearly insurmountable challenge. Many, if not most, of Amaro's fellow generals would undoubtedly resist any attempt to limit the personal prestige and power they had accumulated over their many years of military service. And, just as certain, these same

fuga (escape or "flight" law), first gained prominence under Porfirio Díaz and his *rurales*. Both before and after the Revolution, officials frequently applied the *ley fuga* even when prisoners did not attempt an escape, and thus, the *ley fuga* simply became a means for providing a legal justification for an otherwise extra-legal execution.

³⁸Walsh, Laredo, Texas, NAW, *ibid.*, 812.00/25665, June 9, 1922; *Ibid.*, 812.00/25666, June 9, 1922; and *Ibid.*, 812.00/25681, June 10, 1922. Interestingly, Obregón ordered Amaro to investigate the Mexican military authorities who took part in the Blanco case. See *ibid.*, 812.00/25688, June 19, 1922. Unfortunately, the report itself appears to be lost to the historical record.

³⁹Summerlin, Mexico City, NAW, *ibid.*, 812.00/25502, March 22, 1922; 812.00/25358, February 14, 1922; 812.00/25396, February 14, 1922; 812.00/25401, February 15, 1922; and 812.00/25845, August 5, 1922.

generals would exploit their most important advantage—the violence of modern warfare—to oppose any encroachment of their power. Amaro, however, would prove just as resolute in meeting this challenge. What was it then about Amaro that made him so different from so many of his contemporaries? Looking at Amaro's war experiences between 1915, the year that Amaro left General Gertrudis Sánchez to join Obregón and the Constitutionalists, and 1924, the year he helped crush the de la Huerta rebellion, it seems obvious that the battles of Celaya and Ocotlán stand out as defining moments in Amaro's military career. Like a metaphorical pair of bookends bracketing Amaro's military career as an obregonista, Celaya and Ocotlán were the two bloodiest battles fought during the Mexican Revolution, an era marked by great political unrest and destruction, but not large-scale battles with high casualty rates. Therefore, to the degree that Celaya and Ocotlán proved exceptions to this general trend, plus Amaro's important role in both battles, they were critical in shaping Amaro's perceptions of the Mexican military and its role in society. It is important to remember that Amaro left no memoirs and made no specific references in his speeches or official correspondence to these two battles, or to the manner in which they may have shaped his professionalization efforts. However, the historical record is clear that when Amaro took over as Secretary of War in 1925, he brought with him a fervent determination to reform the military radically. Thus, even without the benefit of Amaro's recorded thoughts on the battles, it is worthwhile to consider what their impact might have been.

As seen in the discussion of the battle of Celaya, pitched battles between two determined foes, such as Obregón and Villa, combined with the new destructive capability provided by automatic weapons, especially machine-guns, revealed that

military forces possessed a tremendous ability to shape national events on a scale previously unknown in Mexican history. In the case of Celaya, Villa's larger army, perceived as nearly invincible, suffered its first significant defeat in a series of battles that ultimately resulted in its destruction. Villa's losses from the two battles fought at Celaya were staggering: 5800 killed, 3000 wounded, and 6500 taken prisoner. From Amaro's perspective, this destruction, while unfortunate, nevertheless proved beneficial. Essentially, Celaya showed that in the hands of a legitimate national authority, military force had the potential to end the chaotic violence that had plagued Mexico since 1910 and thus ensure that the idealistic goals of the Revolution would triumph over the banditry of *villismo*. While Celaya may have allowed Carranza to assume power, ultimately it paved the way for Obregón's rise to the presidency and the establishment of a government dedicated, at least in Amaro's eyes, to carrying out the socioeconomic goals of the Revolution.⁴⁰

If in Amaro's view Celaya represented the ability of military forces to defeat banditry and establish a revolutionary government, then Ocotlán epitomized the importance of monopolizing the destructive capability of that military force. While one

⁴⁰Like many of his contemporaries, Amaro viewed the Mexican Revolution as a social struggle fought on behalf of the Mexican populace, stating in one speech that those who initiated the rebellion against Porfirio Díaz in 1910 were "backing a vast program of social, political, and economic improvements." By the time Amaro was promoted to the position of Secretary of War in 1925, he clearly recognized Mexico's government as the legitimate authority for continuing this social struggle. In discussing the role of the military to a fellow officer, Amaro stated, "Our duty consists of defending the [government] institutions," a duty that could only be accomplished by "never separating ourselves from the path marked by the Revolution."

In reference to the first quote, Amaro's exact words were: "El grupo del pueblo que en 1910 inició el movimiento libertario de México, enfrentándose a una dictadura ignominiosa, respaldando un vasto programa de mejoras sociales, políticas y económicas . . ." Speech entitled "La Actuación de la Secretaría de Guerra por el General de División Joaquín Amaro," February 28, 1930, ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 3, Documentos Relativos al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina.

Referring to the later quote, Amaro stated: "Nuestro deber consiste en defender las instituciones y para cumplir con este compromiso sigo creyendo que por ningún motivo debemos separarnos del camino marcado por la Revolución." See Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 270.

cannot deny the importance of Martínez's eastern campaign in defeating the rebels, it was Amaro's triumph at Ocotlán that decisively ended the uprising. The brutal nature of the battle, epitomized by the deadly river crossing and the trainloads of wounded soldiers, only highlighted the great risk to the legitimate government's survival should rivals successfully appropriate the military's new destructive capability for themselves.

Furthermore, Amaro might have understood that the threat to the survival of the Mexican government did not originate from foreign militaries, but rather from fellow divisionarios whose perception of a cohesive military institution extended no further than their own personal army. To allow the Mexican military to continue in this manner, fragmented and possessing little sense of institutional loyalty or recognition of military force as an exclusive prerogative of the state, would only invite a continuous cycle of bloodshed and political instability.

Amaro thus came to the office of the Secretary of War with a unique firsthand perspective of two of the bloodiest battles fought during the Mexican Revolution. Probably, from Amaro's point of view, the devastating power of the Constitutionalist Army at Celaya made the Revolution possible, while the cold brutality of the Federal Army at Ocotlán preserved it. In that sense, there was never a question of whether the destructive capability of modern warfare, as terrible as it might be, could justifiably be employed. Instead, the real issue for Amaro was: who, among the many factions that emerged from the Revolution, had the right to control the means of production—the men, training, and weaponry—that had made modern warfare and its corresponding influence possible. Although the revolutionary generals who made up the Mexican army may have overthrown Díaz, put down threats from Villa and Zapata, and ousted Carranza, there

seemed to be no end to the constant cycle of uprisings and armed struggle for political control. The revolutionary generals, once so useful and necessary to the Mexican Revolution, now arose as the greatest threat to any semblance of peace and stability. Even when not in a state of outright rebellion, the generals clearly proved willing to abuse their authority for personal gain. Thus, the tremendous challenge facing the new Secretary of War was clear. To tame the tiger unleashed by Madero in 1910, it was imperative that a unified, professional army under the strict control of Mexico's revolutionary government monopolize this new form of violence. To accomplish this end, Amaro would have to forge this loose coalition of fiercely independent revolutionary generals, as well as their personal armies, into a unified and professional national army, one whose members professed loyalty not to individual generals but to the Mexican government.

Amaro Overhauls the Legal System

When Calles first named Amaro as Undersecretary of War in 1924, some may have expected that this tough, ruthless general, known for fearlessly leading his men into battle, would immediately set out on a "scorched earth" policy that relied on brute force to rid the military of insubordinate generals. Yet this was not at all the strategy he employed. Instead, Amaro established as his first priority a complete overhaul of the laws that regulated the military's entire organization. This overhaul, however, was far more than a structural reorganization aimed at individual generals, for at their core, Amaro's legal reforms attempted the formidable task of changing the very culture of the military as an institution. In this sense, Amaro sought to implement the fundamental

ethical reforms, i.e., the “moralization” of the military, which Obregón had so passionately written about in his own private correspondence.⁴¹ As previously discussed, Obregón had expressed in a letter to General Martínez how “the germ of immorality and corruption” had to be purged from the military, and how Carranza simply could not carry out this critical task. Furthermore, Obregón admitted that with only a few months remaining in his own presidency, he himself had made little headway in his effort to moralize the military. What Carranza and Obregón found impossible to implement, Amaro would now attempt.

“My constant worry is . . . that we have created an army as morally bankrupt as the ex-Federal Army”: Amaro’s Conference on Legal Reform

While still serving as Undersecretary of War, Amaro announced that he would soon convene a conference of some of Mexico’s most important generals, including various chiefs of staff, commanders of the various branches within the army (infantry, cavalry, artillery, and aviation), the director of the military college, and several others to discuss the complete reorganization of the army’s outdated laws and regulations.⁴² The conference took place on May 6, 1925, and although Amaro attended the meeting, he appointed his long-time friend and previous Chief of Staff, General José Alvarez, to serve as chairman. As mentioned previously, Alvarez had worked closely with Amaro in a concerted effort to professionalize the soldiers of the 3rd and 7th Military Zones during the latter’s tenure as Chief of Military Operations.⁴³ Now, as chairman, Alvarez gave a

⁴¹See Chapter III, specifically the section entitled “Obregón’s Influence on Amaro.”

⁴²*Excelsior* (Mexico City), May 3, 1925; and *El Universal* (Mexico City), May 7, 1925.

⁴³See Chapter III, specifically the section entitled “Early Attempts at Professionalization.” At the time of the conference, Alvarez served as Calles’ Presidential Chief of Staff.

lengthy but perceptive opening address to the attendees, providing great insight into the thinking behind Amaro's reform program. At one point during his address, Alvarez recalled:

. . . I remember . . . many times when the current Secretary of War [Amaro] would return tired to his office after a typical day of incessantly working to organize and instruct the units of our Division [the 3rd and 7th Military Zones], he would tell me pensively: "my constant worry is the fear that we may be working ourselves to death, only to find out later that we have created an army as morally bankrupt as the ex-Federal Army, which will also have to be destroyed by the people."⁴⁴

The fear that the current military was not only "morally bankrupt" but also dangerously divided, and thus in need of reform, remained a steady theme throughout Alvarez's speech. After emphasizing that his words clearly reflected Amaro's own thinking, Alvarez discussed the grave problems that had plagued Porfirio Díaz's Federal Army: the absence of unity and military *esprit de corps*, the rampant corruption of the officer corps, and the army's failure to protect Mexican citizens. It was these very problems, explained Alvarez, which led to its utter defeat at the hands of the revolutionary armies. Unfortunately, recounted Alvarez, some of these same problems now plagued the current Mexican military:

. . . many [revolutionary armies] were formed that followed their charismatic leaders and that constituted true armies, independent one from the other . . . and that is how we had the Army of the Northwest . . . the Army of the East . . . that of the South . . . the Army of the North . . . and others . . .

⁴⁴" . . . yo recuerdo . . . que muchas veces cuando el hoy Ministro de la Guerra, volvía fatigado a su oficina, después de todo un día como otros, de incesante trabajo de organizar e instruir a los cuerpos de nuestra División, me decía pensativo: 'mi preocupación constante es el temor de que estemos matándonos en el trabajo, para que resulte luego que hemos formado otro ejército moralmente igual al ex-federal, que tendrá también que ser destruido por el pueblo.' " *El Universal* (Mexico City), May 7, 1925. It is unclear why Alvarez referred to Amaro as the Secretary of War, given that he officially occupied the position of Undersecretary. However, with the position of Secretary of War vacant, Alvarez could not have been referring to anyone else. Due to the length of Alvarez's speech, the Mexico City newspaper, *El Universal*, published his entire address in three parts. See *El Universal* (Mexico City), May 7, 9, and 12, 1925.

. . . each one of these nuclei, being diverse or independent armies . . . worked directly and in isolation to provision their own arms and munitions for their troops . . . issuing paper money to pay for their supplies and expenses . . . each one freely awarded ranks, granted promotions, created generals, and formed [military] units

That immense multitude of divisions, brigades, regiments, battalions, special escorts, regional corps, irregulars, etc., etc., all autonomous . . . little by little were merged into one large, combined national [army], controlled and manageable, still with their respective charismatic leaders

Very notable is the fact that the elements recruited by each commander of those armies . . . were thought of as the private property of their commanders, obeying only their direct orders and disavowing in nearly every case [those] . . . of the guiding superior office that was called the Secretary of War.⁴⁵

Clearly, Alvarez, and, by extension, Amaro, believed that the current danger facing Mexico originated from the fact that in raising a revolutionary army to defeat Díaz, they had simply created another army as disunified and as “morally bankrupt” as Díaz’s Federal Army. Furthermore, should this revolutionary army prove incapable of reform, it might, in Amaro’s words, “have to be destroyed by the people.” While the idea of destroying the army or disbanding it in some way may appear exaggerated, Amaro had good reason to worry about the army’s future survival. On July 30, 1925, the U.S. Chargé d’Affaires reported on a document signed by Calles and Luis N. Morones, the

⁴⁵“ . . . se fueron formado muchos que seguían a sus caudillos y que constituyeron verdaderos ejércitos, independientes unos de otros . . . y fue así como tuvimos el Ejército del Noroeste . . . el Ejército del Oriente . . . el del Sur . . . el Ejército del Norte . . . y otros . . .

“ . . . cada uno de aquellos núcleos, como Ejércitos diversos o independientes . . . atendió directa y aisladamente al aprovisionamiento de armas y municiones para sus tropas . . . haciendo emisiones de papel moneda al pago de haberes y gastos generales. . . cada uno de ellos otorgó libramente grados, concedió ascensos, designó Jefes, constituyó unidades . . .

“Aquella multitud inmensa de Divisiones, Brigadas, Regimientos, Batallones, Escoltas especiales, Cuerpos Regionales, Irregulares, etc. etc., todos autónomos . . . poco a poco fueran fundiéndose, en un sólo gran conjunto Nacional, controlado y manejable, aún con sus respectivos caudillos . . .

“Muy de notar es el hecho de que los elementos reclutados por cada jefe de aquellos Ejércitos . . . se conceptuaron como propiedad personal . . . de sus comandantes obedeciendo sólo las órdenes directas de ellos y desconociendo casi en todos los casos . . . de una oficina directora superior que se llamara Secretaría de Guerra.” *El Universal* (Mexico City), May 7 and 9, 1925.

head of Mexico's powerful labor union, which called for the gradual dissolution of the army and the establishment of "battalions of workmen's syndicates belonging to the CROM."⁴⁶ While the Chargé doubted Calles' willingness to actually dissolve the military, the fact that his sources did not question the validity of the document underscores the viable threat to the military emanating from certain sectors of Mexican society. Perhaps reflecting the urgency of reforming the military to insure its survival, Alvarez concluded his speech by asserting that in order to guarantee a firm moral foundation for the Mexican army, the conference members needed to focus their attention on restructuring the military's entire legal structure.

In order to guarantee a moral base, we must strongly fix our attention on the established organic law of the army. This must be, in my thinking, the primary work of this great committee. Before worrying about reforming regulations dealing with maneuvers, circulars, etc., we must put the moral fundamentals of the institution into an organic law [that is] completely clean of empty ideas and administrative details, so that with clarity, the moral principals which shape the revolutionary spirit of the age may be enunciated⁴⁷

"The service of arms demands . . . duty to the point of sacrifice . . .":
Morality and the New Military Laws

On the same day as the conference, Calles and Amaro approved the formation of a commission called, appropriately, the Commission for Studies and Reforms of Military

⁴⁶CROM was the acronym for the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (Mexican Worker Regional Confederation). Schoenfeld, Mexico City, NAW, *ibid.*, 812.00/27579, July 30, 1925; and Weddell, *ibid.*, 812.00/27578, July 18, 1925.

⁴⁷"Para garantía de una base moral, debemos fijar grandamente nuestra atención en la Ley orgánica constitutiva del Ejército. Esta debe ser, en concepto mío la primera labor de ésta gran comisión. Antes de preocuparse por reformar reglamentos de maniobras, circulares, etc., debe poner los fundamentos morales de la Institución en una Ley orgánica limpia completamente de vaciedades y de detalles administrativos, en que con claridad, se enuncien los principios morales, que normen el espíritu revolucionario de la época . . ." *El Universal* (Mexico City), May 12, 1925.

Laws and Regulations, and directed it to meet twice a week.⁴⁸ On June 1, 1925, Calles appointed General Amado A. Aguirre, a loyal veteran of the de la Huerta rebellion, to head the commission, which actually comprised two separate groups.⁴⁹ The first one, known as the Permanent Commission, included Aguirre and General José Luis Amezcua, as well as three other officers who served as secretary, archivist, and librarian. The Permanent Commission studied various reform initiatives and made recommendations to the second group, known as the Grand Commission. This second group, which included the members of the Permanent Commission, various generals in staff and command positions, as well as Amaro himself—approximately 35 members in all—then discussed the initiatives in greater detail.⁵⁰

On March 15, 1926, some ten months after the Permanent and Grand Commissions began their work, the Mexican government published four new laws that both restructured the military and addressed the new moral standards that Amaro expected of his officers and soldiers.⁵¹ Of the four laws, it was the first one, the Law of Discipline, which most clearly delineated these new standards of moral behavior and the consequences of not following them. The Law of Discipline itself comprised three different sections—General Duties, Corrective Discipline, and Court of Honor—with each section containing several specific laws or articles. Given the persistent pattern of

⁴⁸ACT-AJA, Serie 0307, Presidencia de la República y Secretarías de Estado, Expediente 9, Inventario 297, Legajo 10, Fojas 748-758; and Archivo Amado Aguirre, Centro de Estudios Sobre la Universidad (hereafter cited as AAA-CESU), Caja IV, Expediente 13, Foja 156.

⁴⁹As Communications Minister during the de la Huerta rebellion, Aguirre intercepted rebel communications and faithfully informed Obregón of enemy troop movements. ACT-AJA, Serie 0301, Estado Mayor y Cuerpo Auxiliar, Expediente 3, Inventario 121, Legajo 1, Foja 6.

⁵⁰Due to Amaro's presence in the group, the Permanent Commission undoubtedly served as the approval authority for all initiatives as well. AAA-CESU, Caja IV, Expediente 15, Fojas 17-18; 22-23.

⁵¹*Diario Oficial*, Mexico, March 15, 1926.

local uprisings, large-scale rebellions, and corruption, the first several articles in the General Duties section quite naturally focused on clarifying the concept of military duty, which it defined in terms of self-sacrifice, loyalty, guardianship, and adherence to the law:

Article 1. The service of arms demands that the service member carry out the fulfillment of his duty to the point of sacrifice, and that he put before personal interest, the sovereignty of the nation, loyalty to its institutions, and the honor of the Army and the Navy.

Article 2. The service member must observe good conduct so that the people might place all their confidence in the Army and in the Navy, and consider them as the guardian of their rights.

Article 3. The discipline in the Army and in the Navy is the standard to which all service members must adjust their conduct; it [discipline] has as its base obedience and a high concept of honor, justice, and morality, and as its objective, [it has] the faithful and exact fulfillment of the duties which the military laws and regulations prescribe.⁵²

While the first three articles dealt with the general principles of military duty, the remaining articles gradually focused on more specific issues. For example, one article stated that the responsibilities of a commanding officer included the need to maintain order within his unit and insure the proper care of his subordinates. Another article required service members to refrain from complaining needlessly about orders from superiors, while still a third prohibited service members from interfering, either directly

⁵²“Artículo 1. El servicio de las armas exige que el militar lleve el cumplimiento del deber hasta el sacrificio, y que anteponga al interés personal, la soberanía de la Nación, la lealtad a las instituciones y el honor del Ejército y de la Armada Nacionales.”

“Artículo 2. El militar debe observar buen comportamiento, para que el pueblo deposite toda su confianza en el Ejército y en la Armada, y los considere como la salvaguardia de sus derechos.”

“Artículo 3. La disciplina en el Ejército y en la Armada es la norma a que los militares deben ajustar su conducta; tiene como bases la obediencia, y un alto concepto del honor, de la justicia y de la moral, y por objetivo, el fiel y exacto cumplimiento de los deberes que prescriben las leyes y reglamentos militares.” “Ley de Disciplina del Ejército y de la Armada Nacionales,” *Diario Oficial*, Mexico, March 15, 1926.

or indirectly, in political matters.⁵³ Eventually, the last articles in the General Duties section focused on even more narrow issues involving minute details of proper military decorum, details that Amaro and his generals nevertheless believed sufficiently important to codify into law. Thus, the last few articles specified the need for servicemen to render salutes, give up their seat to those of higher rank, and abstain from entering houses of prostitution while in uniform.⁵⁴

Having described some of the more general, as well as the very specific, norms of behavior in the General Duties section, the Law of Discipline then outlined in its second section, Corrective Discipline, the conditions under which a commander could arrest those who committed minor infractions of the law. Notably, the last article in this section specified that each arrest would be documented in the member's service record.⁵⁵ However, for those in the military who committed more serious offenses, such as drunkenness, gambling, mismanagement of funds, general negligence, as well as any offense that harmed the "unit's reputation" or the "dignity of the military," Amaro required a system of punitive measures that went beyond a mere "corrective discipline" or arrest. Thus, the third section of the Law of Discipline, the Court of Honor, established a system of military tribunals, analogous to a court martial, to handle these more serious offenses. Armed with the authority to try service members, the Court of Honor could impose upon those found guilty penalties ranging from transfer to another unit to suspension and demotion to a lower rank to imprisonment.⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid., Articles 7, 11, and 17.

⁵⁴Ibid., Articles 18, 19, and 23.

⁵⁵Ibid., Article 33.

⁵⁶Ibid., Articles 36, 37, and 38.

The next pair of new laws—the Law of Retirements and Pensions and the Law of Promotions and Rewards—addressed the excessive number of officers within the ranks, particularly generals, and abolished the informal promotion system that had directly led to this situation. The guidelines specified in the Law of Retirement and Pensions allowed for voluntary retirement for those with 20 to 35 years of service, but also mandated retirement once the service member reached a certain age.⁵⁷ According to the new law, enlisted and non-commissioned officers faced mandatory retirement upon reaching the age of 45. The law also set the retirement age for lieutenants and captains at age 50; for majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels, retirement occurred at age 60. Lastly, brigadier generals, generals of brigade, and generals of division faced compulsory retirement at ages 65, 68, and 70 respectively. Logically, anyone guilty of committing treason would lose the right to collect a pension, and, in an apparent attempt to keep track of retired service members and any potential trouble they might stir up, the law required that all retirees receive permission from the proper military authorities before changing residence or traveling outside the country.⁵⁸ Finally, the law also outlined numerous conditions under which military members or their family could collect pensions and disability pay.

The first half of the Law of Promotions and Rewards specified two distinct promotion categories corresponding to peace time and war time conditions. The importance of the peace time provisions lay in the close connection Amaro made between promotion and professional military education.⁵⁹ For example, corporals and sergeants

⁵⁷ “Ley de Retiros y Pensiones del Ejército y Armada Nacionales,” *Diario Oficial*, Mexico, March 15, 1926, Articles 9 and 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Articles 15 and 18.

⁵⁹ “Ley de Ascenso y Recompensas del Ejército y Armada Nacionales,” *Diario Oficial*, Mexico, March 15, 1926, Articles 4, 5, 6, and 8.

had to attend, respectively, the *Escuela de Clases* (School for Noncommissioned Officers) and the *Escuela de Formación de Oficiales* (School of Officer Formation) to remain eligible for promotion to the next higher rank. In addition, the law required that prior to promotion, all officers had to have met the appropriate education requirements as spelled out in the General Plan of Military Instruction. To make the connection between promotion and education even more firm, the law also stipulated that failure to pass professional examinations could temporarily disqualify a service member for promotion.⁶⁰ Amaro's emphasis on professional military education as a condition for promotion stemmed directly from his earlier work at educating his troops as a regional commander in northern Mexico. More importantly, it also foreshadowed the tremendous educational reform effort he would undertake in his future years as Secretary of War and as Mexico's first Director of Military Education. The section of the law dealing with promotion during war time clearly sought to eradicate the old system of "generales de dedo" that had resulted in Mexico's top-heavy officer corps. According to the law, only officers in certain high-ranking positions could bestow war time promotions, and even then such promotions required approval from a higher military body. Leaving little to chance, the law detailed seventeen specific deeds, such as saving artillery pieces from falling into enemy hands or putting down a barracks rebellion, which could result in a war time promotion.⁶¹

The fourth and final law, known as the Organic Law, dealt primarily with organizing the disparate revolutionary armies into a unified, structured military force with

⁶⁰Ibid., Article 12.

⁶¹Ibid., Article 25.

clearly delineated roles and responsibilities.⁶² To put some sense of order into the ad hoc military forces that had come into existence following the chaos of the Mexican Revolution, the law limited the Mexican army to five distinct branches—High Command, Combat Arms, Auxiliary Services, Military Education Establishments, and Special Corps. The law also classified all military personnel as either active, reserve, or retired, specifying that only those officers whose ranks had been recognized by the Secretary of War and ratified by the Senate could serve on active duty. Additional sections of the Organic law detailed the specific structure for each of the army's five branches. For example, the High Command included the General Staff, the Inspector General, the Directorate of War Materiel, and the various territorial commands, while Combat Arms consisted of the infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineers, and air corps. While the bulk of the Organic Law dealt with the army, a second, smaller section detailed the organizational structure of the navy as well.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Organic Law was the fact that it identified military education establishments as one of the five branches of the Mexican military. While military schools had long existed in Mexico, Amaro's elevation of the military schools to a separate branch on a par with the more traditional elements of the Mexican military, such as combat and auxiliary forces, promised to place a whole new emphasis on the importance of professional military education. In actuality, however, the Organic Law provided very few details as to what education's new-found status within the military might entail, stating only that schools devoted to military education would fall into one of three categories: schools of formation (basic training schools), schools of application and perfection (technical schools), and superior schools (advanced training

⁶²“Ley Orgánica del Ejército Nacional,” *Diario Oficial*, Mexico, March 15, 1926, chapters 1 – 5.

schools).⁶³ Thus, as with the Law of Promotions and Rewards, the Organic Law provided only a preview of the important role that professional military education would play in Amaro's attempt to reform the armed services. How exactly the military schools would carry out this reform even Amaro did not yet fully understand. For the moment, Amaro apparently felt content knowing that the official doctrine of the Mexican military now recognized the importance of professional military education in training and shaping its officers and soldiers.

In examining the numerous articles of the Organic Law and its focus on the reorganization of the military, one can easily overlook the preliminary section, which did not address matters of military organization and structure. Nevertheless, the preliminary section made a strong contribution to Amaro's overall reform effort, for it attempted the difficult task of transitioning the military away from a military culture fixated on the cult of *personalismo*, or the tendency by troops to identify with, and profess loyalty to, their commanding general, rather than the government as an institution. Thus, in the preliminary section of the Organic Law, Amaro included the following points:

I. The National Army and Navy are institutions destined to defend the integrity and independence of the nation, to maintain the authority of the constitution and other laws, and to preserve internal order.

III. The command of the National Army and Navy rests with the President of the Republic, who will be able to exercise [such command] personally or by means of the military authorities whom he might designate. The hierarchical command will be exercised by the military in conformity with what is provided in the respective regulations [of the different branches].⁶⁴

⁶³Ibid., Article 49.

⁶⁴"I. El Ejército y la Armada Nacionales son Instituciones destinadas a defender la integridad e independencia de la patria, a mantener el imperio de la Constitución y de las demás leyes y a conservar el orden interior."

"III. El mando del Ejército y de la Armada Nacionales corresponde al Presidente de la República, quien podrá ejercerlo por sí o por medio de las autoridades militares a quienes designe. El mando

Of course, it was one thing for Amaro to change the military's laws to reflect a new emphasis on loyalty to the state, but quite another matter to transform an entire military culture oriented around the concept of personalismo. The same, in fact, could be said of the other three major laws as well. The simple fact that the Law of Discipline, for example, demanded that soldiers fulfill their duty "to the point of sacrifice" and place loyalty to the government ahead of personal interests hardly guaranteed that such noble sentiments would become an immediate part of the military ethos. Indeed, the U.S. military attaché in Mexico, writing in 1928, observed that with the important exception of the Law of Discipline—the one law most concerned with education and moralization—none had yet gone into effect. According to the attaché, economic reasons served as the primary reason for the delay, although he did expect the remaining three laws to go into effect the following year.⁶⁵

Regardless as to exactly when the laws might go into effect, Amaro certainly held no expectations that his new legal reforms alone could solve the problems of disloyalty, poor discipline, and general lawlessness pervading the officer corps. Amaro personally knew many of the Revolution's most prominent generals, having taken the field of battle both alongside and against them, and thus clearly understood that many of these generals possessed enough power and influence to simply ignore his new laws with impunity. While Amaro remained aware of the potential threat these generals posed, in truth, the

jerárquico será ejercido por las militares de guerra conforme a lo dispuesto en los reglamentos respectivos." Ibid., Preliminary Section.

⁶⁵Harold Thompson, NAW, RG 165, MID, Report No. 2040, April 27, 1928; *ibid.*, Report No. 2045, May 2, 1928; and *ibid.*, Report No. 2067, May 11, 1928. These reports are English translations of, respectively, the Law of Retirement and Pensions, the Law of Promotions and Rewards, and the Law of Discipline. Thompson submitted an English translation of the Organic Law as well. See *ibid.*, Report No. 1154, October 12, 1926.

current generation of revolutionary generals never occupied his primary interest when it came to matters of reform. For the most part, Amaro viewed these generals as a group to be controlled and tolerated, but, given their background and experience, probably beyond reform. Instead, Amaro focused his reforms on the next generation of officers and soldiers, a generation that, with the proper training and direction, might better adhere to the standards of morality, sacrifice, duty, and loyalty that Amaro had codified in his new laws, a generation that, through reform, might escape the fate of having “to be destroyed by the people.” Where then would this next generation of officers and soldiers receive this vital training and direction? The Law of Discipline and the Organic Law hinted at the answer: the military schools.

CHAPTER V
DUTY, HONOR, LOYALTY:
AMARO'S MORALIZATION CAMPAIGN

While Amaro's overhaul of the military's legal system received much public attention, a far more obscure project revolved around a little-known plan to purchase land for the construction of a brand new military school. While the proposed school carried a lofty sounding name—the Grand Military Academy of the Army—in reality, the grandiose plans Amaro may have had for this new academy never matched its exalted title. Although the historical record is sparse, it appears that in August 1924, just prior to his appointment as Undersecretary of War, Amaro wrote Obregón regarding a proposal from Mr. Juan Yrigoyen to sell the Mexican government two plots of land for the sum of 697,612 pesos.¹ On the larger plot, consisting of 1777 hectares or nearly seven square miles, Obregón and Amaro planned to construct the school itself, while the smaller plot, measuring slightly more than one square mile, would house the officers, a hospital, and other facilities. Reaching an agreement with Mr. Yrigoyen on the final price of the land that September, Obregón, in one of his final acts as president, then ordered the Secretary of Land and Public Credit to release the appropriate funds. Unfortunately, the story ends there, for neither Amaro nor Obregón made any further reference to the school. Whether Mr. Yrigoyen ever received his money, or whether the Mexican government ever

¹ Obregón to Martínez, July 4, 1924, AGN/PP, Grupo Obregón-Calles, Caja 3, Expediente 101-M-44.

purchased the land, remains uncertain. But, clearly, Amaro never did get to build his Grand Military Academy of the Army. The story, however, is instructive for two reasons. First, it shows that before taking the position of Secretary of War, and even before his legal reforms, Amaro had planned to make professional military education an important part of his reform efforts. Secondly, the story illustrates Amaro's grand vision for constructing a new system of military education that proved far different from anything the Mexican army had previously known.

Amaro Overhauls the Colegio Militar

Mexico's famed *Colegio Militar*, the military's primary commissioning source, had long enjoyed a special, even mythical, reputation for producing the nation's bravest and most loyal military officers. For example, during the Mexican-American War in 1847, the school served as the scene of the climatic battle between American and Mexican forces. Reputedly, as American forces scaled the walls of the Colegio Militar—the last fortified position in Mexico City—several cadets fought to the death rather than surrender. Also, during the Agua Prieta rebellion against Carranza in 1920, a group of ever faithful cadets from the Colegio Militar escorted Carranza during his flight from Mexico City.² Although the school closed for six years (1914-1920) during the chaotic period of the Revolution, upon its reopening Obregón sought to restore the Colegio Militar to its exalted status by adding new courses and hiring more competent instructors.³

²Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 38.

³Gabriel Cuevas, *El Glorioso Colegio Militar Mexicano en un Siglo (1824-1924)* (México, D.F.: Sociedad Mexicana de Publicaciones, 1937), 190-192.

However accurate the school's reputation might have been in the past, Amaro nevertheless realized that the Colegio Militar had deteriorated significantly, both physically and in terms of its ability to train officers. In fact, Amaro did not have to look very hard to see that the Colegio Militar as it existed in 1925 would never match the lofty goals he had for professionalizing his officer corps, as even foreign visitors to the school readily grasped some of its more obvious problems. On July 9, 1925, just weeks before Amaro assumed the position of Secretary of War, Edward P. Lowry, a representative from the American Consulate General, visited the school at the invitation of an acquaintance in the Mexican army. In touring the facilities, Lowry painted a shocking picture of the poor state of the school, both in terms of physical deterioration and military discipline.⁴ According to Lowry's report, papers and cigarette butts littered the parade grounds, and without adequate drainage, pools of stagnant, filthy water lay everywhere. The school's horses, caked in dried mud, stood in piles of manure, while the field equipment used during maneuvers showed no signs of having been cleaned since the last military exercise. Peering through the broken windows of the cadet barracks, Lowry saw untidy beds and dirty linen, floors that cadets evidently used as spittoons, and, everywhere, dust. The cadets themselves presented a slovenly appearance, with unkempt uniforms highlighted by missing buttons, scuffed shoes, and dirty equipment. Twice, one of the cadets standing guard rendered a salute to officers with a saber in one hand, a cigarette in the other, and without properly assuming the position of attention. Most telling, perhaps, was the fact that the two cadets escorting the American visitor exhibited little awareness of the poor state of the school, and freely admitted that many cadets

⁴Consul Edward P. Lowry, Mexico City, NAW, RG 59, M274, 812.20/64, July 21, 1925.

hoped to join a revolutionary uprising as a means of getting promoted. In a statement that could have reflected Amaro's sentiments, the American Consul remarked, "In several years' experience as an officer with American troops, and with native troops in the Philippine Islands and in Persia, I believe I never saw a command where the moral [sic] was as low as this School."⁵ For Amaro, the dilapidated state of the Colegio Militar likely served as a perfect microcosm of the problems plaguing the entire Mexican military.

Given the school's decrepit condition, Amaro began his own internal investigation of the Colegio Militar. One detailed report, conducted by General Salvador S. Sánchez on behalf of Amaro's Permanent Commission, highlighted the fact that the school's entire infrastructure was old and in desperate need of repair.⁶ Problems included an insufficient number of buildings to house the various schools (engineering, cavalry, artillery, etc.), an overcrowded dining hall and gymnasium, drafty classrooms with leaky roofs, outdated physics and electrical engineering labs, and an obsolete and poorly maintained plumbing and water system. While the school's infrastructure suffered from age and neglect, Sánchez also faulted the school for having unnecessary levels of administrative bureaucracy and an excessive number of support personnel. Lastly, Sánchez criticized both the quality of cadets entering the Colegio Militar and the level of instruction they received. Because the school did not have an entrance examination, the Colegio Militar found itself admitting all manner of students, who typically applied for reasons other than those stemming from a genuine desire to serve in the military.

⁵Ibid. Lowry undoubtedly meant to use the word "morale" instead of "moral."

⁶Ligeras Observaciones Sobre El Colegio Militar: Estudio presentado a la Permanente de la Comisión de Leyes por el General Salvador S. Sánchez, 1926, ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 3, Documentos Relativos al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina.

According to Sánchez, the majority of cadets entered the school because they had recently lost their position as government employees, and thus looked at the Colegio Militar as little more than another form of government employment. Others cadets were orphans and only entered the school because it served as a source of food and lodging. Lastly, Sánchez identified a large number of somewhat unruly individuals who entered involuntarily. Typically, these students enlisted at the insistence of government officials who clearly viewed the Colegio Militar as more of a correctional institute than a military academy. Lastly, in discussing the quality of instruction, Sánchez criticized the professors for emphasizing rote memorization while failing to teach cadets reasoning and critical thinking skills. In a similar vein, Sánchez wrote that the Colegio Militar erred greatly by not including any type of practical application exercises that allowed the cadets to see how classroom theories applied on the battlefield.

Sánchez hardly stood alone in his opinion that the Colegio Militar suffered from substandard instruction. In a December 1924 report, several officers noted that instructors often used outdated texts and regulations in their courses, such as the textbook “Tactical Application,” published in 1898, or the military transportation regulation for railways that cited other regulations dating from 1894.⁷ In another outspoken report, the author, Captain Luis Alamillo Flores, soon destined to become one of Amaro’s most trusted advisors, spoke of a “heavy atmosphere” within the Colegio Militar that thoroughly “drowned” the cadets’ enthusiasm for learning.⁸ Alamillo Flores also

⁷Iniciativa presentada en diciembre de 1924, por un grupo de Jefes y Oficiales pertenecientes a la 12/a. Brigada de Caballería, a las órdenes del C. General de Brigada Adrián Castrejón, *ibid.*

⁸Alamillo Flores’ full remarks were: “In the interior of the establishment one was breathing a heavy atmosphere; the enthusiasm, the vocation and the energy slowly was going away, drowning in the spirit of the students. Their morale was declining and with it the affection for the Army, the love of studying. This change . . . was due to the lack of tact and knowledge of the majority of the officers of the

criticized the policy of tying the professors' salaries to the number of classes taught, resulting in a situation where a school of only 684 students employed an incredible 386 professors. Another officer and future advisor to Amaro, Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Lazcano, wrote an editorial critical of the school's level of instruction and specifically pointed out the problem of unqualified professors and an outdated curriculum that failed to take into account the changes in warfare after World War I.⁹ More importantly, however, Lazcano highlighted a problem that critics of the school emphasized repeatedly: the Colegio Militar was a school that, despite its mission to graduate military officers, failed to instill into the cadets any sense of loyalty to and identification with the military as an institution.¹⁰ In particular, Lazcano mentioned the tendency of cadets to identify

Colegio, entrusted with inculcating in the heart of the cadets the grand beginnings of enthusiasm, education, and energy that should have formed their characters. They were only occupied with imposing punishments, filling themselves with vanity, without understanding that punishment is the most serious action that one can carry out"

Alamillo Flores' original remarks in Spanish were: "En el interior del establecimiento se respiraba una atmósfera pesada; el entusiasmo, la vocación y la energía, lentamente se iban ahogando en el espíritu de los alumnos. Su moral declinaba y con ella el cariño al Ejército, el amor al estudio. Este cambio . . . obedecía a la falta de tacto y conocimientos de la mayor parte de los señores oficiales de alumnos del Colegio, encargados de inculcar en el corazón de los cadetes, los grandes principios de entusiasmo, educación y energía que deberían formar sus caracteres. Únicamente se ocupaban de imponer castigos, llenándose de vanidad, sin comprender que el castigo es la más grave acción que puede ejecutarse . . ." See "Apuntes para la Historia del Colegio Militar: El Profesorado," by Captain Luis Alamillo Flores, Jr., November 3, 1925, *ibid.*

⁹*El Demócrata* (Mexico City), October 9, 1925.

¹⁰Lowry reported similar problems at the Colegio Militar in his report as well. Not all critics focused on such critical problems, however. According to a report given confidentially to Amaro by a Mr. Pablo Evers, the key to improving the Colegio Militar lay in attracting the sons of the upper class to enroll. Since Evers believed young men's interests centered not around military service, but girls, cars, and sports, he suggested that the Colegio Militar adopt sharp and attractive uniforms, and then give cadets time daily to parade around town to better catch the attention of the local women. Evers also suggested that the school host dances in which the families of the cadets—minus any young men—could attend. Although Evers admitted that providing cadets with cars was unrealistic, he suggested instead that the cadets parade around town on horseback. Finally, Evers suggested that the Colegio Militar form military sports clubs to compete with and eventually overshadow the private sports clubs. See "Ligeras Sugestiones (Trabajo presentado confidencialmente al señor Secretario de Guerra y Marina, en 1925) (Por el Ingeniero Pablo Evers)," ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 3, Documentos Relativos al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina.

themselves as technical specialists, such as engineers, rather than as military officers, while Sánchez characterized the level of military discipline at the school as “very relaxed.”¹¹

Amaro concluded that the Colegio Militar’s decrepit state warranted a massive physical and organizational renovation, and that only by closing the school and completely rebuilding it could he accomplish such a task. With Calles’ full support, Amaro shut down the school on September 30, 1925, and subsequently embarked on a ten-month reconstruction program that cost nearly 3 million pesos.¹² On July 24, 1926, the day of the school’s official reopening, Amaro stood before a completely remodeled school that bore little resemblance to the previous one. In place of the outdated and cramped dining facilities stood a new and greatly expanded dining hall, complete with a fully updated kitchen. A service area with laundry and ironing facilities, a barbershop, and a recreational center that included a pool hall and a bowling alley were also new additions to the campus. Modern medical facilities, complete with updated labs, a pharmacy, and surgical and dental offices, ensured that cadets received proper medical attention, while renovations to the school’s veterinary services assured a similar level of care for the school’s horses and other animals. Newly constructed buildings, including student dormitories, stables, a riding school, and a gymnasium complex complete with a swimming pool, dotted the grounds, while brand new furniture completed the office renovations. As a finishing touch, Amaro had certain hallways and assembly rooms

¹¹*El Demócrata* (Mexico City), October 9, 1925; and Ligeras Observaciones Sobre El Colegio Militar: Estudio presentado a la Permanente de la Comisión de Leyes por el General Salvador S. Sánchez, 1926, ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 3, Documentos Relativos al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina.

¹²*Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1925-1926*. (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1926), 25.

named in honor of those who fought in the Revolution. The names included both the famous, such as Obregón, and the less famous, such as Amaro's father, Antonio.¹³

Reflecting the pride that Amaro felt towards his new school, an article on the reopening of the Colegio Militar quoted with great satisfaction the words of the U.S. military attaché, who stated, "This Colegio Militar is smaller than West Point, but if in any part of the world there is a facility better equipped than San Jacinto, I haven't seen it."¹⁴

While the new buildings and facilities captured the public's attention, the changes Amaro intended for the Colegio Militar went beyond merely structural ones. Physical renovations to the school may have solved the problems of rundown facilities and cramped quarters, but no amount of reconstruction could address the general climate of poor morale and relaxed military standards that pervaded the school. Even more than the former dilapidated state of the school, Amaro cited the Colegio Militar's failure to instill adequately into the cadets the concepts of civic virtue, morality, and duty to the people of Mexico as the most fundamental problem plaguing the institution. In a pamphlet authored by Amaro and published just prior to the school's reopening, he stated:

If we consider the army as a great school in which a good part of the citizens receive their education, not only military but also civic and moral, it was not reasonable that the Colegio Militar, from where future officers should emerge, that is to say, the mentors of the citizens, would be behind in organization, in their methods of teaching, in their plans of study, and in their material elements of education.

¹³"Una obra estupenda de la revolución – el nuevo Colegio Militar," *Gladiador* (July 17, 1926), 12-15.

¹⁴The exact words in the article were: "Este Colegio Militar es más pequeño que West Point, pero si en alguna parte del mundo hay un plantel mejor equipado que San Jacinto, yo no lo he visto." Because the Colegio Militar resided in the neighborhood of San Jacinto, it was often referred to by that name as well. Cited in "La Apertura del Nuevo Colegio Militar," *Revista del Ejército y de la Marina* (July 1926), 588-589.

But if the old Colegio Militar had many defects in what is referred to as its system of teaching, the most fatal were, without a doubt, not having inculcated and developed in the student civic and moral virtues, and having excluded from its programs some of the economic and social sciences.

As a result, those officers never understood in what moment they were failing in their duty to the people and even to legal institutions. Special care was made to cultivate in them a spirit of iron discipline that did not admit reasoning, and, believing they were complying with their duties as soldiers, failed to comply with the most sacred [duties] of the citizen.¹⁵

In his presidential address at the school's reinauguration on July 24, 1926, Calles stressed the very same ideals of service to country and loyalty to the state that Amaro hoped the Colegio Militar would eventually instill in his younger officers. In part, Calles stated:

But we cannot congratulate ourselves upon having improved the physical condition of the college . . . or rest content at having laid down a well considered plan of study and interior regulation . . . unless we see to it that those who graduate from here as experts in the art of war preserve all their characteristics as men, without departing in the slightest degree from the life and the sentiment of the nation; that while they are versed in military tactics and technique and prepared to follow the hazardous career of arms they shall above and before all remain servants of the nation

This Military College is not . . . an establishment which differs in any way from the other institutions in which the government is trying to educate the new generation of the country. . . . But in all these schools, from the Military College to the smallest rural school . . . we are seeking to turn out

¹⁵“Si consideramos al ejército como una gran escuela en la que una buena parte de ciudadanos recibe educación, no solamente militar sino tambien cívica y moral, no era razonable que el Colegio Militar, de donde deben salir los futuros oficiales, es decir los mentores de aquel, estuviera atrasado en organización, en sus métodos de enseñanza, en sus planes de estudio y en sus elementos materiales de educación.

“Pero si el antiguo Colegio Militar tenía muchos defectos en lo que se refiere a su sistema de enseñanza, los más funestos fueron sin duda alguna, no haber inculcado y desarrollado en el alumno las virtudes cívicas y morales y haber excluido de sus programas algunas de las ciencias económicas y sociales.

“De allí que aquellos oficiales nunca supieron comprender en qué momento faltaban a su deber para con el pueblo y aun para con las Instituciones legales. Se tuvo especial cuidado en cultivar en ellos el espíritu de la disciplina férrea que no admite razonamiento y, creyendo cumplir con sus deberes de soldados, dejaron de cumplir con los más sagrados del ciudadano.” ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 3, Documentos Relativos al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina.

men who shall learn, from their childhood, that they have a social mission with which later on in their mature years they must comply—to serve others. This is to say, not to expend their forces entirely for their own . . . betterment, but . . . [to give] their lives to insure the social uplifting of the majority, which . . . is the aim and justification of the revolutionary movement in Mexico.¹⁶

Clearly then, Amaro sought to use the new Colegio Militar as a kind of social laboratory where cadets immersed themselves in a training environment that fostered a heightened respect for military service, carefully defined as loyalty to the state and service to the people of Mexico. While acknowledging the importance of a curriculum that provided cadets with the technical knowledge necessary to carry out one's military duty, whether as a cavalry officer, infantryman, engineer, etc., Amaro firmly believed that the school also had to include specific courses and provide an overall environment that consciously developed the cadets' moral qualities as well. In discussing the Colegio Militar's new curriculum, Amaro stated:

In our education project, we have given preference to the social sciences, to the civic and moral virtues, and in order to establish a complete equilibrium between these and the necessary subjects of a purely scientific nature, to sports.

. . . the officer will be able to orientate the opinion of his subordinates in favor of those who labor and produce, since only through knowledge of the social sciences will he acquire the conviction that the soldier is the guardian of the economic interests of the nation, the sentinel that cares for and protects the product of the working classes . . .¹⁷

¹⁶Robert Hammond Murray, *Mexico Before the World, Public Documents and Addresses of Plutarco Elías Calles* (New York: The Academy Press, 1927), 160-162.

¹⁷“En nuestro proyecto de educación hemos dado preferencia a las ciencias sociales, a las virtudes cívicas y morales, y para establecer un complete equilibrio entre éstas y las necesarias asignaturas de carácter netamente científico, a los deportes.

“ . . . el oficial podrá orientar la opinión de sus subalternos en favor de los elementos que laboran y producen, pues sólo mediante el conocimiento de las ciencias sociales adquirirá la convicción de que el soldado es la salvaguardia de los intereses económicas de la Nación, el centinela que cuida y protege el producto del trabajo de las clases laborantes . . .” Ibid.

Consequently, Amaro had the Colegio Militar expand its education plan to include social science courses that had little to do with an officer's technical field, but everything to do with the officer's role as a dutiful and loyal servant of the Mexican government.¹⁸ By 1930, all first-year cadets took a course entitled Military Morality, while second and third-year students enrolled in such classes as Military Jurisprudence and Notions of the Law of War, Military Psychology, and Military Geography and History.¹⁹ To insure a more qualified pool of potential students from which to choose, Amaro imposed minimum age, height, and education requirements, and required that all applicants submit two letters of recommendation from "honorable people" who could vouch for the candidate's moral character. In addition, all applicants underwent an extensive examination process that included geography, math, history, and language tests, as well as an assessment of their medical and psychological well-being.²⁰

Lastly, Amaro instituted a rigorous daily program that bore little relationship to the apathetic school environment the American visitor Lowry so vividly described in 1925. A 1934 academic plan shows that cadets began their day at 6:00 in the morning with two hours of physical training, followed by three hours of classes ending at 12:45 PM. From 3:00 to 6:00 PM, the cadets kept busy with various kinds of field training, and then attended an evening class, typically ethics or psychology. At times, equestrian or an afternoon swim class replaced the standard physical training period. Morning classes

¹⁸ "El Colegio Militar de México y su Función Social," *Revista del Ejército y de la Marina* (June 1927), 461.

¹⁹ Reglamento del Colegio Militar, 1930, ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 3, Documentos Relativos al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina.

²⁰ "Una obra estupenda de la revolución – el nuevo Colegio Militar," *Gladiador* (July 17, 1926), 18-19.

consisted of some combination of math, geography, history, hygiene, Spanish, foreign language, military law, physics, and chemistry, while the afternoon training included field exercises involving explosives, communications, arms training, and infantry and cavalry maneuvers. The cadets finally finished their busy day with a study period that typically lasted from 8:00 to 10:00 PM. Each Friday at 3:45 PM, cadets participated in overnight field exercises involving reconnaissance patrols, night maneuvers, battlefield tactics, and standing guard, and returned at 12:45 PM on Saturday. Then, from 3:00 to 6:00 PM that same day, the cadets underwent various inspections and military reviews. Only Sunday remained free of any formal training. Finally, the cadets capped off their rigorous school year with a week-long field exercise in November.²¹

Amaro's Moralization Campaign and the Press

While Amaro held high hopes for his newly rebuilt Colegio Militar and the mission to transform the next generation of Mexican officers into loyal and dutiful servants of the state, he also realized that classes in such areas as “military morality” were not the only way, or perhaps not even the most effective way, to accomplish this monumental task. Clearly, Amaro devoted a great deal of time and resources into overhauling the Colegio Militar, but he also understood that his unique educational program could occur outside the classroom as well. To expand his education program beyond the classroom and reach as wide an audience as possible—both officers and enlisted, whether new recruits or older veterans—Amaro searched for other, more creative means of educating and transforming the Mexican military. As seen previously,

²¹ ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 1, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar.

Amaro once characterized the Mexican army as “a great school.” Thus, in a very creative move, Amaro decided to use the print media, and, specifically, professional military journals, as an alternate type of “schoolhouse” to impart the very same values of loyalty, discipline, and service that formal schools such as the Colegio Militar communicated to their students.

It is not clear exactly when Amaro first thought of using professional military journals and other publications to supplement and expand upon the education and “moralization” effort taking place at the Colegio Militar. Nevertheless, Amaro undoubtedly drew upon his recent experience in 1924 as a commander during the de la Huerta rebellion. It was during this time that Amaro launched a magazine for his troops entitled *Acción* (Action), appointing Ignacio A. Richkarday, the officer who had run Amaro’s education program back in 1922, as editor. According to Richkarday, the articles in *Acción* would “raise the spirit of the army” in its fight against the rebels, while also serving as a guide to help soldiers follow “straight and honorable paths,” and thus prevent future rebellions.²² In seeking articles for his magazine, Amaro readily accepted the services of Professor Higinio Vázquez Santana, who, like Richkarday, had aided Amaro in his effort to educate his troops in the early 1920s.²³ Amaro also created at this

²²The full context of Richkarday’s quote is as follows: “All the articles that [the magazine] contains are directed to raising the spirit of the Army to continue fighting with faith in victory against the traitors, and above all, [to continue] nourishing the morale and pointing out the advisability of always following straight and honorable paths in order to win over the welfare of the fatherland, avoiding in all that follows, betrayals that fill it with mourning and stain it with blood.”

“Todos los artículos que lleva, son tendentes a levantar el espíritu del Ejército para seguir luchando con fe en el triunfo, contra las traiciones, y sobre todo alimentando la moral e indicando la conveniencia de seguir siempre caminos rectos y honrados para conquistar el bienestar de la Patria, evitando en lo sucesivo traiciones que la llenan de luto y la manchen de sangre.” Letter from Richkarday to Amaro, January 28, 1924, ACT-AJA, Serie 0201, Estado Mayor y Cuerpo Auxiliar, Expediente 16, Teniente Coronel Ignacio A. Richkarday, Inventario 92, Legajo 1, Foja 1.

²³Amaro to Richkarday, July 8, 1924, Foja 2, *ibid*.

time two other publications, a small tract called *El Gato* (The Cat), and a daily newspaper named *El Agrarista* (The Agrarianist), both dedicated to countering various publications supported by the Catholic Church and *latifundistas* (landowners).²⁴ Amaro, like most prominent leaders during the Mexican Revolution, considered the Catholic Church and landowners as allies of the old, corrupt Díaz regime, and as such, they comprised two of the primary reasons for which the Mexican Revolution had been fought.²⁵ More important than his opposition to the Catholic Church and landowners, however, was the fact that in utilizing such publications as *El Gato* and *El Agrarista*, Amaro expressed an astute understanding of the powerful influence such publications could have in shaping popular opinion. In Amaro's own words:

Since it is impossible to combat with arms these noxious elements [the clergy and the landowners] because they are incapable of risking their lives to defend an idea, I have determined to combat them with the press, because only in this manner will they feel in the shadow of their hiding places the punishment of the fire whip of truth.²⁶

Amaro's past experience with creating publications to combat those ideologies he viewed as harmful during his years as a commander clearly influenced his decision as

²⁴Higuera to Amaro, March 25, 1924, ACT-AJA, Serie 0201, Estado Mayor y Cuerpo Auxiliar, Expediente 1, Capitán Ernesto Higuera, Inventario 82, Legajo 1, Foja 1; Higuera to Amaro, April 15, 1924, *ibid.*, Foja 7; and Higuera to Amaro, May 8, 1924, *ibid.*, Foja 10. After defeating General Estrada's forces at Ocotlán during the de la Huerta rebellion, Amaro established his headquarters in the staunchly conservative city of Guadalajara. Given the poor relations between government and Catholic Church officials since the outbreak of the Revolution, it is not surprising to find Catholic Church officials in Guadalajara involved in printing publications the government considered harmful. In his letter of April 15, 1924 to Amaro, Higuera identified three such publications: *Restauración* (Restoration), *El Informador* (The Informer), and *El Radical* (The Radical).

²⁵For a discussion of Obregón's successful bid to garner the support of agrarian groups, both during his 1920 presidential campaign and the 1924 de la Huerta rebellion, see Linda B. Hall, "Alvaro Obregón and the Politics of Mexican Land Reform, 1920-1924," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 60 (May 1980): 213-238.

²⁶"Como a estos elementos nocivos es imposible combatir con las armas porque son incapaces de exponer sus vidas para defender una idea, me he propuesto combatirlos con la prensa, porque sólo así sentirán en la sombra de sus escondrijos el castigo del látigo de fuego de la verdad." Amaro to Alvarez, February 4, 1924, ACT-AJA, Serie 0201, Estado Mayor y Cuerpo Auxiliar, Expediente 1, General José Alvarez, Inventario 77, Legajo 1, Foja 1.

Secretary of War to employ professional military journals as a tool for indoctrinating his soldiers with articles emphasizing loyalty, duty, and service. Not surprisingly then, the year 1925 witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of new military journals, as well as a decided change in tone of those that already existed. Of all the various military publications that circulated during this period, perhaps the editorials and articles contained in the Mexican military's premier journal, *Revista del Ejército y de la Marina*, (Magazine of the Army and the Navy) best illustrate Amaro's attempt to use military journals to moralize the military—that is, to end a culture long characterized by militarism and lawlessness and replace it with one centered around such values as loyalty and service to country. Although the *Revista* originated in 1906 during the Díaz regime, the magazine took on a decidedly different tone under Amaro's direction. In his effort to employ the army's premier magazine as an instrument for inculcating the officer corps with moral values, Amaro turned once again to his long time friend, Richkarday. Amaro clearly appreciated Richkarday's past experience as a professor and, more recently, as the editor of *Acción*, the magazine Richkarday had published as part of the program to boost the morale of Amaro's troops and to retain their loyalty in light of the de la Huerta rebellion. Seeking to draw on that past experience and use it to reshape the culture of the entire Mexican military, Amaro appointed Richkarday as the new director of *Revista* on January 1, 1925.²⁷

As one might expect from a magazine devoted to military matters, a typical issue of *Revista* contained articles of specific interest to different branches or specialties within the military, such as artillery, infantry, cavalry, aeronautics, and the navy. In addition to

²⁷*Revista del Ejército y de la Marina*, January 1925.

these regular articles, any given issue of *Revista* contained articles dealing with engineering, the general staff, military justice, administration, supply, health services, hygiene, sports, and foreign militaries. However, interspersed among the many articles dealing with technical military matters, the *Revista* also included at least one or two articles each month devoted to addressing such issues as honor, professionalism, discipline, loyalty, duty, patriotism, and the importance of military education. One article, for example, stated that “military honor marches united with national honor,” and thus cannot serve the cause of “despots and thieves, of tyrants and assassins.”²⁸ Another article, discussing the importance of loyalty and duty, determined that “to be loyal to an institution such as the army, it is necessary to obey the precepts of the law of the organization,” adding that “the soldier [of the revolutionary period] is restricted . . . in his ability to voice specific opinions inappropriate to his profession.”²⁹ In general, articles containing these kinds of moral themes most often appeared in those issues of *Revista* published between 1925 and 1927, although they continued to show up in various issues at least until 1933.

On a few occasions, Richkarday creatively used the covers of *Revista* to emphasize moral themes. The most fascinating example was a drawing featuring the profile of a woman, who, with eyes closed, head tilted, and palms raised close to her face, held a bright red, heart-shaped bottle from which radiated vapors. The woman may have

²⁸“El honor militar marcha unido al honor nacional. . . . El honor militar no puede tener su espada al servicio de los déspotas y ladrones, de los tirano y asesinos.” “Honor Militar,” *Revista del Ejército y de la Marina* (October 1925): 893.

²⁹“ . . . ser leal a una institución como la del Ejército, es necesario cumplir con los preceptos de ley de su organización El soldado revolucionario tiene restringido . . . las facultades de emitir determinadas opiniones impropias de su profesión.” Capitán 1º José E. Galván, “Lealtad y Deber,” *Revista del Ejército y de la Marina* (July 1927): 514.

possibly represented Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, as she wore a white, toga-like dress, and sported a laurel wreath in her hair. Just behind the woman appeared a soldier in a full dress uniform, who, while aware of the beautiful woman next to him, appeared completely uninterested in her. The caption underneath the drawing provided the full message: “The Nation captures the heart of the soldier, which must be one of complete loyalty and self-denial.”³⁰ Another cover, in which the figure of a Mexican soldier, rifle in hand, towered over a city at nighttime, a cover that Richkarday himself drew, also proved notable. The caption at the top read: “The Army faithfully keeps vigil for peace and order.”³¹ The emphatic promotion of such values as honor, loyalty, duty, self-denial, and service, whether subtly displayed on the covers of *Revista*, or communicated in its articles, clearly reinforced Amaro’s overall effort to break the culture of militarism and instill moral values into his officer corps.

Since *Revista* geared its articles towards matters primarily of interest to the officer corps, Amaro quickly realized that the entire enlisted corps, that is, the vast majority of the military, remained largely unaffected by his journal-based moralization campaign. Thus, in 1925, Amaro created a supplement to *Revista* entitled *El Soldado* (The Soldier), a short magazine approximately 16 to 20 pages in length containing articles specifically targeted at the enlisted corps. In its first few years of publication, *El Soldado* functioned primarily as a short primer on basic education, and included articles on geography, history, grammar, basic human anatomy and biology, arithmetic (complete with drills and

³⁰ “La Patria toma el corazón del soldado que debe ser todo lealtad y abnegación para ella.” *Revista del Ejército y de la Marina* (September 1926).

³¹ “El Ejército vela fielmente por la paz y el orden.” *Revista del Ejército y de la Marina* (June 1930).

sample problems), personal hygiene, and military organization. Within the first year however, Richkarday began inserting brief articles similar in content to those seen in *Revista*, until eventually, articles devoted to moralizing the enlisted corps became a regular feature. The various issues of *El Soldado* published in 1926 serve as an excellent illustration. Beginning with the March issue, Richkarday authored monthly editorials that focused on a single, specific core value, such as duty, valor, discipline, loyalty, sacrifice, and subordination. With such titles as “Discipline as a Base,” “The Spirit of Sacrifice,” and “The Dangerous Illness of Pride,” Richkarday’s editorials continuously reinforced Amaro’s campaign to create a loyal and disciplined military.³² Throughout the years 1925 and 1926, each issue of *El Soldado* carried at least one article devoted to one or more of these core values, and while the frequency of such articles waned by 1927, they never completely died out.

If the editorials in *El Soldado* proved to be the most obvious method for moralizing the enlisted corps, Richkarday resorted to more understated methods as well. For example, *El Soldado* carried two quotes that appeared on the first page of every issue. The first, by José María Morelos, the legendary hero of the 1810 independence movement, stated that “Dying is nothing when one dies for the fatherland,” while the second quote, attributed to Charles Darwin, declared “That which does not evolve, perishes.”³³ Perhaps even more subtle than the editorials and articles, although just as important, were the covers that adorned the 1926 issues of *El Soldado* and the manner in

³²“La Disciplina como Base,” *El Soldado* (June 1926); “Espíritu de Sacrificio,” *El Soldado* (September 1926); and “La Peligrosa Enfermedad de Orgullo,” *El Soldado* (October 1926).

³³As they appeared on the February 1925 issue of *El Soldado*, the quotes read as follows: “Morir no es nada cuando por la patria se muere” and “Quien no evoluciona perece.”

which they, like the covers of *Revista*, promoted Amaro's moralization efforts. For example, the March issue featured a photo of Sergeant José Lozano, who, according to the caption on the cover, "succeeded in distinguishing himself by his application to study, subordination, and discipline."³⁴ The very next month, *El Soldado* recognized on its cover six soldiers for their loyalty in defending a plaza in Aguascalientes during a local uprising. In August, three more soldiers appeared on the cover, one for doing well on an examination and the remaining two for studying hard and exhibiting proper behavior. As a final example, a full-length photo of Private Isabel Rocha, dressed in a crisp uniform and standing at attention, made the cover of the May issue. According to the caption accompanying the photo, Rocha acted as a "seat of discipline and fulfillment in his duty," ideals that *El Soldado* claimed spoke "very clearly of the military virtues of our troops." Furthermore, the caption epitomized Rocha as one "whose attitude will always be a stimulus and noble example."³⁵ By featuring soldiers on the covers of *El Soldado* and praising their acts of loyalty and discipline, Amaro and Richkarday clearly hoped that other member of the enlisted corps would emulate these same behaviors.³⁶

Between *Revista's* monthly distribution of 10,000 issues, and *El Soldado's* circulation of 20,000 issues, Amaro reached a substantial portion of the 50,000-70,000 members that comprised the military during the latter half of the 1920s.³⁷ Yet Amaro did

³⁴"... ha llegado a distinguirse por su aplicación al estudio, subordinación y disciplina." *El Soldado* (March 1926).

³⁵"... una cátedra de disciplina y de cumplimiento en el deber, que hablan bien claro de las virtudes militares de nuestra tropa ... cuya actitud será siempre un estímulo y noble ejemplo." *El Soldado* (May 1926).

³⁶"Soldados Distinguidos," *El Soldado* (March 1926): 15.

³⁷*Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1924-1925*, 39; *Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1925-1926*, 30, 34; *Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1926-1927*, 52;

not stop with these two publications, as 1926 witnessed the creation of two new military journals, *Revista del Colegio Militar* (Magazine of the Colegio Militar) and *Gladiator* (Gladiator). According to the first issue, the purpose of the *Revista del Colegio Militar* was

to make known to the students the continuous progress and advances in the art of war, as well as also to foment the sentiment of discipline, to cultivate the concept of honor, and to establish the sentiment of duty, for which the student will find in it [the *Revista del Colegio Militar*], similar to a completed model of reading, the fragment or the extracted page of the book of heroic feats that stimulate and exalt his spirit in the faith of the fatherland.³⁸

Given its focus on discipline, honor, and duty, the stated purpose of *Revista del Colegio Militar* closely mirrored the mission of the Colegio Militar itself. In contrast, *Gladiator* billed itself as a weekly magazine for all members of the military, from generals to privates, featuring articles as much technical in nature as literary, and as much scientific in tone as light-hearted.³⁹ However, what really caused *Gladiator* to stand out from the other magazines were its beautifully illustrated covers. Each week, the cover of *Gladiator* featured a different ancient warrior from various eras and different cultures, and, at other times, heroic images of laborers, soldiers, and mythical figures, all striking dramatic poses. The colorful and powerfully drawn covers undoubtedly sought to evoke

Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1927-1928, 44; and *Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1929-1930*, 24.

³⁸“... dar a conocer a los alumnos los continuos progresos y adelantos en el arte de la guerra, así como también fomentar el sentimiento de la disciplina, cultivar el concepto del honor y arraigar el sentimiento del deber, a cuyo efecto el alumno encontrará en ella, como acabado modelo de lectura, el fragmento o la página arrancada del libro de los hechos heróicos, que estimulen y exalten su espíritu en la fe de la Patria.” “Editorial,” *Revista del Colegio Militar* (September 1926): 2.

³⁹“‘Gladiator’, una Revista del Ejército y para el Ejército,” *Gladiator* (June 11, 1926).

among Amaro's troops a martial spirit that connected the mission of the Mexican military with the gallant deeds of past warriors and heroes.

Additional Military Reforms

Not all of Amaro's energies as Secretary of War revolved around the Colegio Militar and military journals, for Amaro still had to contend with a top-heavy command structure filled with overly ambitious generals. To address this increasingly important matter, Amaro turned to the *Comisión Revisora de Hojas de Servicios* (Service Records Review Commission), a special agency employed in the past by both Carranza and Obregón in their efforts to streamline their own bloated military hierarchies.⁴⁰ Amaro, however, believed that, on the eve of the de la Huerta rebellion, the Mexican army had hastily accepted into its ranks many generals and lower-ranking officers of substandard talent or suspect loyalty.⁴¹ Consequently, Amaro reenergized the Commission by restructuring it and adding more personnel so it could accelerate its work of purging the military of those officers who possessed, in Amaro's words, "vague moral principles."⁴² Between 1925 and 1926, the Commission reviewed the records of 2,224 officers, dismissing 465 officers, including 34 generals, and reducing in rank another 258.⁴³

⁴⁰Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 46 and 67; and Gárfias Magaña, "El Ejército Mexicano de 1913 a 1938," 450-451.

⁴¹*Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1924-1925*, 52.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 53. The full context of Amaro's quote is as follows: "Con motivo del movimiento 'Delahuertista' se intensificaron las labores de esta Comisión Revisora, para depurar el Ejército; ya que se aceptaron los servicios de cuantos quisieron prestarlo, muchos de ellos de no muy claros antecedentes militares y de vagos principios morales."

⁴³*Ibid.*, 53-54; and *Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1925-1926*, 32. In 1925, Amaro claimed that without these officers on the army payrolls, he would save the military 565,622.25 pesos a year.

While the Commission continued its work, Amaro also conducted a separate program in 1925 to reduce the number of officers as part of Calles' overall effort to trim the defense budget. This separate review resulted in the transfer of 925 active-duty officers, including 75 generals, to the primary reserves.⁴⁴ Ever wary of personalismo, in which troops professed loyalty to their local commanding general rather than the state, Amaro took measures to prevent any one general from gaining too large a personal following by frequently rotating his regional commanders among the various military zones.⁴⁵ Several years later, in 1927, one observer commented that Amaro's policy of shifting commands had made a genuine impact:

Up to about two years ago, it was always the custom that when a general officer changed post, his troops always moved with him. Now, while the officer changes, the units of his command do not. The 23rd Battalion has been stationed in this district for nearly two years and, in that time, there have been no less than five changes of general officers and still more in the lower grades. The former system produced a condition whereby the troops were identified with the leader, even to such an extent that if one asked a soldier to what command he belonged, he answered: "I am of the people of so and so (naming his general)." The result of the new system would seem to be a weakening of the sense of loyalty to an individual commander and a strengthening of the loyalty to the unit or to the army as a whole.⁴⁶

In addition to streamlining the military by dismissing inept and disloyal officers, Amaro reduced the number of units comprising his active-duty forces as well. For

⁴⁴*Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1924-1925*, 40.

⁴⁵Virginia Prewitt, "The Mexican Army," *Foreign Affairs* 19, no. 3 (April 1941): 613. Among Amaro's papers is a translated copy of Prewitt's 1941 article. In a clear confirmation of Prewitt's observation concerning Amaro's policy of shifting commanders ("In 1924, the nation was divided into thirty-three military zones and a policy of shifting commands was begun. This served to prevent any one general from establishing personal influence over too large a sector of the Army."), someone, possibly Amaro himself, wrote in the margin, "Exacto!" See ACT-AJA, Serie 0501, Artículos, ensayos, iniciativas y Reglamentos del Ejército.

⁴⁶Paul H. Foster, Salina Cruz, Mexico, NAW, RG 59, M274, 812.00/28878, October 9, 1927.

example, by 1925, Amaro had restructured various tactical units, reducing cavalry regiments from four squadrons to three, while trimming infantry battalions to three companies of riflemen and one company of machine gunners.⁴⁷ Secondly, as part of an effort to rationalize the maze of administrative procedures and reduce the budget, Amaro reorganized his own office by reducing the number of people assigned to his staff and by replacing civilian employees with military personnel.⁴⁸ Impressed with the accomplishments of the Grand and Permanent Commissions in overhauling the military's most important laws, Amaro formed the *Comisión Técnica* (Technical Commission) to continue the arduous process of examining the military's outdated regulations. Over the years, the Technical Commission drafted new regulations governing the cavalry, infantry, rural defenses, railway transportation, uniforms, and such recently created departments as the Inspector General, the General Staff of the Army, the Department of War Materiel, and the Military Fund of Mutual Aid.⁴⁹ Lastly, in 1931 Amaro centralized responsibility for publishing the military's numerous journals and magazines by making his own press office within the Department of the Secretary of War responsible for all printed material. By this time, Amaro had created several new magazines, including *Revista de Equitación* (Equestrian Magazine), *Revista Militar Deportiva* (Military Sports Magazine), *Revista Aérea* (Air Force Magazine), *El Intendente* (The Quartermaster), *Horizontes* (Horizons), and *Revista de Tiro* (Gun Magazine).⁵⁰

⁴⁷*Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1924-1925*, 9.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1927-1928*, 15; *Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1929-1930*, 22; and *Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1930-1931*, 25.

⁵⁰*Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1930-1931*, 27.

One of Amaro's most important reform efforts at this time included an army-wide literacy program targeted at the great number of soldiers who never learned to read or write. Such a program, of course, fit quite naturally with the great importance Amaro had always placed on education, as seen from his past efforts in hiring professors to educate his troops, and in renovating the Colegio Militar. Between 96 to 126 *escuelas de tropa* (troop schools) in operation at army bases throughout the nation provided classes in such subjects as Spanish, arithmetic, geometry, geography, history, military virtues, and hygiene.⁵¹ The schools offered a two-year program of study, keeping a careful account at the end of each school year as to how many students attained literacy. In 1926, for example, Amaro reported that of the 10,121 soldiers enrolled in the *escuelas de tropa*, 7,863 had demonstrated an ability to read and write at either a moderate or advanced level.⁵² Three years later, Amaro proudly detailed in his yearly report that 17,083 students learned to read and write that year, bringing to 62,659 the total number of soldiers who had acquired some degree of literacy since 1924.⁵³ Not surprisingly, Amaro saw the *escuelas de tropa* as much more than schools where students learned to read and write. Very much like the Colegio Militar and the military journals, Amaro saw them as yet another way to break the culture of militarism and lawlessness, and, in Amaro's words "infuse in the soldier a high sense of military duty."⁵⁴ For Amaro, the classes in

⁵¹*Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1924-1925*, 26-27; and *Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1925-1926*, 29.

⁵²*Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1925-1926*, 29.

⁵³*Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1929-1930*, 46.

⁵⁴"... infundir en el soldado un alto sentido del deber militar." *Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1924-1925*, 27.

history and military virtues proved especially important in teaching his troops this “high sense of military duty.” As Amaro remarked in his annual report:

“... undoubtedly, the learning [taking place] in the escuelas de tropa has enhanced the sensitive spirit of our soldiers, and the emotions awakened by the lessons in [the] history and military virtues [courses] have unquestionably increased their love of country, enabling them to carry out their mission in a conscientious manner.”⁵⁵

In fact, the military virtues course proved so important to the escuelas de tropa that by 1928, school instructors felt constrained in their ability to offer a better, more detailed course due to the lack of a suitable text. Amaro believed the need to improve these courses so important that he had already directed his office to write a book on military virtues that would then serve as the course textbook.⁵⁶

One of Amaro’s more unique efforts in reforming the Mexican military involved sending young officers to foreign countries to either enroll in military schools or serve as military attachés. Serving overseas was not unheard of. As mentioned previously, Obregón had sent General Eugenio Martínez, as well as the previous secretary of war, General Francisco Serrano, to Europe.⁵⁷ However, Obregón banished Martínez to Europe for his initial role in the failed 1927 rebellion, while Serrano went to Europe in an ill-fated attempt by Obregón to cure his gambling and drinking addictions.⁵⁸ Amaro, however, sent his young officers overseas for much more useful reasons, as he sought to

⁵⁵“... es indudable que las luces de la enseñanza en las escuelas de tropa han aprovechado el espíritu sensible de nuestros soldados, y la emotividad que despiertan las lecciones de Historia y Virtudes Militares, ha multiplicado seguramente el amor patrio en ellos y los ha hecho cumplir a conciencia su misión.” *Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1926-1927*, 36.

⁵⁶*Memoria de la Secretaría de la Guerra y Marina, 1927-1928*, 35.

⁵⁷See Chapter IV.

⁵⁸Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 96.

take advantage of other nations' advances in military doctrine, organization, and technology. Throughout his tenure, Amaro sent no less than 52 officers overseas, with most destined for Europe. Amaro took a particular interest in France, sending 12 of his officers to either serve in the embassy or enroll in that nation's various military schools, such as the Military School of Administration, the Superior School of Aeronautics, the Central School of Explosives, and the French Military Academy in Joinville-le-Pont.⁵⁹ Spain proved to be the next most frequent European destination, taking six officers, followed by Germany, Italy, England, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden with one or more officers each.⁶⁰ Although Amaro, like many of his contemporaries, expressed a certain disdain for the U.S., he nevertheless sent nine officers there to attend the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, or to study American techniques in aeronautical engineering, arms production, and cement and concrete manufacturing.⁶¹ Of those officers serving in Latin America, five went to Argentina, three to Chile, and one or two each to Peru, Brazil, Cuba, and Guatemala, which served as a base for Central America as a whole.

Those officers serving in foreign embassies and military schools proved a great source of information, as they regularly sent back to Mexico a wealth of material related

⁵⁹ACT-AJA, Serie 0304, Agregados y Estudiantes Militares en el Extranjero, Expediente 4, Teniente Coronel Adalberto Aguirre Manjarrez, Inventario 234, Legajo 1, Foja 1; *ibid.*, Expediente 14, Capitán Angel S. Calvo, Inventario 244, Legajo 1, Fojas 1-2; *ibid.*, Expediente 17, Teniente José María Chavirri, Inventario 247, Legajo 1, Foja 1; *ibid.*, Expediente 27, Capitán Francisco Ibañez Martínez, Inventario 257, Legajo 1, Foja 1; and *ibid.*, Expediente 23, Mayor Salvador González de Cosío, Inventario 253, Legajo 1, Foja 1. At the French Military Academy in Joinville-le-Pont, González de Cosío studied physical education.

⁶⁰This statistic is based on a review of all the separate files Amaro kept on each of his attachés and overseas military students. ACT-AJA, Serie 0304, Agregados y Estudiantes Militares en el Extranjero.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, Expediente 16, Teniente Coronel Gerardo Rafael Catalán, Inventario 246, Legajo 1, Fojas 1 and 8; *ibid.*, Expediente 6, General Juan F. Pino Azcarte, Inventario 236, Legajo 1, Foja 1; and *ibid.*, Expediente 51, Coronel Fernando Vázquez Avila, Inventario 281, Legajo 1, Foja 1.

to Amaro's military reform efforts. Even before Amaro convened his Commission for Studies and Reforms of Military Laws and Regulations, the group charged with rewriting Mexico's military laws, he took an interest in the Italian military, which had begun reorganizing its own armed forces. Thus, in February 1925, the military attaché in Italy, Francisco J. Aguilar González, sent Amaro a report entitled "The Royal Italian Army's Organic Law Reform Plan," as well as copies of the Italian armed forces' most current regulations.⁶² As Amaro's interests shifted from overhauling the military's legal system to restructuring its system of military education, the nature of information Amaro received from his officers overseas shifted as well. In February 1931, for example, Aguilar, now serving as the military attaché in the U.S., sent Amaro a detailed, 26-page report entitled "The Military Educational System in the United States Army and the Military Preparation of the North American Youth, Basis of the Army Reserves."⁶³ Yet it was another report that Aguilar sent several months later, entitled "Report on the General Command and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, U.S.," that best highlighted the new focus of Amaro's military reform program, a school of advanced learning that would teach Mexican officers the basics of command and how to serve on a general staff.⁶⁴

⁶²"Proyecto de Reformas de la Ley Orgánica del Real Ejército de Italia," Two separate letters from Aguilar to Amaro, both dated February 3, 1925, *ibid.*, Expediente 2, Coronel Francisco J. Aguilar González, Inventario 232, Legajo 1, Fojas 5-7.

⁶³"El Sistema Educacional Militar en el Ejército de los Estados Unidos y la Preparación Militar de la Juventud Norte Americana, Base de las Reservas del Ejército," Letter from Aguilar to Amaro, February 9, 1931, *ibid.*, Legajo 4, Fojas 238-239.

⁶⁴"Informe sobre la Escuela Superior de Mando y Estado Mayor General, de Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, E.E. U.U." Report from Aguilar to Amaro, May 13, 1931, *ibid.*, Legajo 5, Fojas 384-392.

Clearly, Amaro understood that the current officer education system in Mexico, restricted primarily to the Colegio Militar, could play no more than a limited role in reforming the officer corps, since its mission focused on transforming relatively young and inexperienced civilians and enlisted corps members into disciplined and loyal junior officers. Given the overall lack of discipline and absence of institutional loyalty so characteristic of the Mexican military during this period, this in itself proved to be a challenging task. Nevertheless, a real danger still existed, as the new maturing generation of officers entered a military still dominated by independent revolutionary generals with little regard for Amaro's professionalization efforts.⁶⁵ Essentially, Amaro did not believe that the Colegio Militar, by itself, could counteract the potentially corrupting influence of the current generation of Mexican generals. Mexico needed an additional school of advanced learning, Amaro argued, to complete the army's transformation from its revolutionary origins, in which the personal experiences of its generals served, for better or worse, as the primary source of instruction for junior officers, to a modernized force, in which officers, through their studies at this advanced school, would develop a body of military doctrine to guide the military in its future development. As Amaro stated:

Given our army's birth upon the triumph of the Revolution, bringing as an evolutionary process in its formation the experience of the personally lived events that have constituted until now its best source of learning and transformation, it is necessary, before the constant progress of the country, to transform it [the army] completely

To achieve this, it is necessary to broaden the always constant and growing work of our schools of formation, organizing Centers of Superior

⁶⁵To cite one example, the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico relayed an American observer's opinion of the immense personal prestige and power General Arnulfo R. Gómez enjoyed within the military. According to the observer, "As an indication of General Gómez's prestige in the Army, he communicates directly with President Calles and not with General Amaro, his technical superior. General Gómez is at present a ranking General in the Army, which gives him added prestige." James R. Sheffield, Mexico City, NAW, RG 59, M274, 812.00/27736, March 21, 1926.

Studies where our officers—interpreting the course marked by the principles of the Revolution, studying with reason and care the diverse stages of our history, our present circumstances, and our needs for the future—can arrive at the conclusion of a principle of doctrine that directs us definitively in the scientific organization of our national army.⁶⁶

In short, Amaro viewed this new advanced school as the next logical step in shaping the future generation of Mexico's military leaders. Yet Amaro would not look to the Italian army as his inspiration and model for this new advanced school, but to the French, and it would not be Aguilar to whom Amaro would turn to for help in organizing this school, but to a rather inexperienced, but eager, young captain named Luis Alamillo Flores.

⁶⁶“Nacido nuestro Ejército al triunfo de la Revolución, trayendo como proceso evolutivo en su formación, la experiencia de los hechos personalmente vividos, que han constituido hasta ahora su mejor fuente de enseñanza y transformación, es necesario, ante el progreso constante del país, transformarlo por completo

“Para lograrlo, es preciso ensanchar la labor siempre constante y siempre creciente de nuestras Escuelas de formación, organizando Centros de Estudios Superiores, donde nuestros Oficiales, interpretando las orientaciones marcadas por los principios de la Revolución, estudiando con juicio y detenimiento las diversas etapas de nuestra historia, nuestras circunstancias actuales y nuestras necesidades para el futuro, puedan llegar a la conclusión de un principio de doctrina, que nos encauce definitivamente en la organización científica del Ejército Nacional.” Letter from Amaro dated January 1, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 9, Correspondencia con la Escuela Superior de Guerra.

CHAPTER VI

THE CREATION OF A SUPERIOR WAR COLLEGE

Soon after Amaro made the decision to temporarily close the Colegio Militar in 1925, a series of guest editorials appeared in the Mexican daily, *El Demócrata*, publicly criticizing the decision to shut down the school. Writing under a pseudonym, Captain Luis Alamillo Flores, a recent graduate from the Colegio Militar just prior to its closing, leapt to Amaro's defense. In a series of editorials published by *El Demócrata*, Alamillo Flores forcefully made the case that the school's dilapidated state warranted such a drastic measure.¹ Impressed with the editorials, Amaro sent one of his officers to track down the anonymous author, and soon Alamillo Flores found himself en route to meet the famous general. Arriving at Amaro's lavish residence, Alamillo Flores shared lunch with the general and his family, and then accompanied Amaro back to his office. Turning to one of his colonels, Amaro stated, "Let me introduce you to the writer that we have been searching for. He is the author of the articles defending the Colegio Militar. Order him relieved of his present position and assign him to General Aguirre's commission."² Then, turning his attention back to Alamillo Flores, Amaro dismissed the

¹Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 252-257.

²"... aquí le presento al escritor que andábamos buscando. Es el autor de los artículos que defienden al Colegio Militar . . . Ordene usted que cause baja en donde se encuentre y alta en la comisión con mi general Aguirre . . ." Ibid., 257. The commission Amaro referred to, formally known as the Commission for Studies and Reforms of Military Laws and Regulations, was the same one entrusted with overhauling the military's outdated legal system. See Chapter IV for details.

young officer, “Goodbye captain, we’ll have an opportunity to see each other.”³ Thus began a long and close relationship between the two officers, for in Alamillo Flores Amaro had found an officer who fervently shared his vision to use Mexico’s military educational system to reform and professionalize his army.

Alamillo Flores and France’s École Supérieure de Guerre

Given Amaro’s love for books, perhaps it was only fitting that Alamillo Flores had come to the Secretary of War’s attention through the young captain’s ability to eloquently express his thoughts in print. Amaro, however, had a much more critical mission in mind for Alamillo Flores than that of writing newspaper editorials, for Amaro sought to create an entirely new military school. While certainly proud of the improvements he had made to the Colegio Militar, Amaro decided, as discussed previously, that Mexican officers required a second, more advanced school to train an elite cadre of officers in the latest techniques of military warfare, officers who would then serve in leadership positions of command and as part of the military’s general staff. Writing years later, Amaro described this school, known as the Escuela Superior de Guerra (Superior War College), as part of the natural progression in the evolutionary process of the Mexican military’s continued maturation, and, at the same time, as a completely new institution that constituted a significant break with the existing military schools.⁴ As one of Amaro’s staff officers explained:

³“‘Adiós, capitán,’—agregó, dirigiéndose a mí—‘ya tendremos oportunidad de vernos.’” Ibid., 257.

⁴Letter from Amaro, January 1, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 9, Correspondencia con la Escuela Superior de Guerra; and *La Escuela Superior de Guerra: sus principios, sus modalidades y sus métodos* (Secretaría de Guerra y Marina, Mexico, DF, 1932), 29.

These studies [referring to the advanced military courses] are given in the Escuela Superior de Guerra, whose mission is to prepare officers [to serve on the] general staff. In this school, they undertake advanced military studies . . . connected with the art and science of war. The formation of general staff officers, the first time attempted in Mexico, obeys the necessities of the present era in that the high command of the armies must rely on effective collaborators, especially in Mexico, where the preparation of our generals is commonly incomplete.⁵

How and under what circumstances did Amaro become convinced that the Mexican military, and, specifically, he, as Secretary of War, required the aid of a general staff? According to Alamillo Flores, the realization that Amaro needed a general staff originated with a little-known incident in 1926, soon after Obregón announced that he would begin his campaign to succeed Calles as president of Mexico.⁶ According to Alamillo Flores, Obregón, then residing in his home state of Sonora, decided to travel to Mexico City by train to begin organizing his presidential campaign. Before he could leave the state, however, Yaqui Indians rose up against the government, and in the ensuing chaos, surrounded Obregón's train, cut its communication lines, and essentially imprisoned Obregón inside his own cab. As Secretary of War, Amaro quickly directed at least eight infantry battalions, three cavalry regiments, and various artillery and aviation forces to head north to confront the Yaquis. Unfortunately for the federal forces, strong rains had destroyed the railway bridge at Ocotlán, completely disrupting Amaro's deployment and leaving Obregón in great danger. To deal with the crisis, Amaro dispatched Alamillo Flores and another officer to Ocotlán, where they oversaw the

⁵"Estos estudios se imparten en la Escuela Superior de Guerra, cuya misión es la de preparar Oficiales de Estado Mayor. En esta Escuela se abordan altos estudios militares, que . . . se relaciona con el arte y la ciencia de la guerra. La formación de oficiales de Estado Mayor que por primera vez se intenta en México, obedece a las necesidades de la época presente en que el alto mando de los ejércitos debe contar con eficaces colaboradores, máxime en México en donde la preparación de nuestros generales es, por lo común, incompleta." Letter from Lt. Colonel Ignacio A. Beteta to Amaro, August 11, 1934, ACT-AJA, Serie 04, Director General de Educación Militar, 1931-1935, Notas Personales.

⁶Luis Alamillo Flores, *Doctrina Mexicana de Guerra* (México, D.F., 1943), xvii-xviii.

construction of a temporary bridge. Within forty-eight hours, Amaro's forces once again set out for Sonora, yet persistent setbacks, including unfinished railroads further north, delayed the arrival of Amaro's men. In Alamillo Flores' words, the sight of the Mexican forces strung out along the road, arriving late and in piecemeal fashion, "offered a display of disorder and defeat, in truth, [it was] sad and painful."⁷ In analyzing the problems the Mexican army encountered with this critical deployment to rescue Obregón, Amaro concluded that he required a general staff to aid him in executing his orders and solving strategic military problems.⁸

The only other detailed information concerning the creation of a general staff appeared in the publication, *La Patria*, a weekly newspaper founded by Amaro that frequently published news items related to the military.⁹ According to the article, Amaro's Technical Commission had recently completed a new set of regulations detailing the creation and operation of a general staff. With Amaro's approval, the Technical Commission recommended that the general staff take charge of resolving all issues related to the military and its ability to prepare for war. Accordingly, the general staff would study and report on various issues related to military legislation, organization, instruction, and training, as well as formulate all war plans. While the Technical Commission accomplished the initial step of outlining the development and workings of a general staff, a more difficult challenge still lay ahead: the selection and training of officers capable of serving on a general staff to provide guidance to the Secretary of War.

⁷"... ofreciendo un espectáculo de desorden y de derrota, en verdad triste y doloroso." Ibid., xviii. Alamillo Flores provided no further information as to the actual success of the deployment once it arrived in Sonora, or specifically how Obregón escaped his predicament. Dulles briefly mentioned the incident as well, with only slight variations in the story. See Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 311-312.

⁸Alamillo Flores, *Doctrina Mexicana de Guerra*, xviii.

⁹*La Patria* (Mexico City), September 3, 1928

Although Amaro had already decided that the Escuela Superior de Guerra would serve this function, he did not yet have a clear idea of how to organize such a school.

Furthermore, Amaro doubted that the senior officers in his own military, given its popular origins as a revolutionary army, had the resident expertise to carry out such a monumental task successfully. To solve this dilemma, Amaro came up with a very practical solution. If the Mexican military did not have the proper knowledge to create such a school, then Amaro would send his own officers overseas to acquire this knowledge. As seen in the previous chapter, Amaro sent many of his young officers overseas to various schools in Europe to acquire specific information in such areas as explosives, aeronautics, and arms production. Similarly, to solve the problem of creating a school of advanced military studies in Mexico, Amaro sent Alamillo Flores to attend the *École Supérieure de Guerre* (Superior War College) in Paris, France.¹⁰

In March 1928, Alamillo Flores arrived in Paris where he began a brief tour as the assistant military attaché to Major Pedro Mercado at the Mexican embassy.¹¹ At this point he could not yet enter the *École Supérieure de Guerre*, for the French first required that the Mexican officer spend one year with the French Army's 1st Regiment of Engineers in Versailles. Thus, in August 1928, Alamillo Flores entered France's School of Arms to begin his one-year training period.¹² Throughout his stay, Alamillo Flores sent Amaro several reports on the French military's organization and structure, including

¹⁰Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 360; and Alamillo Flores, *Doctrina Mexicana de Guerra*, xviii-xix.

¹¹ACT-AJA, Serie 0304, Agregados y Estudiantes Militares en el Extranjero, Expediente 5, Capitán Luis Alamillo Flores, Inventario 235, Legajo 1.

¹²Ibid., Foja 70b.

copies of regulations and books covering the various branches of the French military.¹³ During his time with the 1st Regiment of Engineers, Alamillo Flores took special note of the manner in which the French army integrated their engineers with the other branches of the army (infantry, cavalry, artillery, etc.), as well as the high quality of instruction and training exercises that concentrated on preparing its soldiers for combat.¹⁴ While Alamillo Flores certainly took an interest in French battlefield tactics and military doctrine, clearly what most impressed him was how the various branches of the French army worked together, as well as their singular focus on preparing for war. Such cooperation and focus on military matters clearly stood in stark contrast to the autonomous nature of the revolutionary generals and their private armies, in addition to their overt preoccupation with politics.

As Alamillo Flores neared the end of his year of preparatory training with the 1st Regiment of Engineers, he received news that the French had approved his request to attend the École Supérieure de Guerre with the next incoming class beginning November 1929.¹⁵ Excited at being the first Mexican officer to attend France's renowned school for advanced military studies, Alamillo Flores wrote Amaro expressing his sincere desire to apply his experiences at the École Supérieure de Guerre for the betterment of the Mexican army:

And my satisfaction [at being the first Mexican officer to attend the École Supérieure de Guerre] grows . . . because we are the ones, those [officers]

¹³Ibid., Foja 70d. Examples of specific reports include: Descripción General de un Cuartel de Caballería del Ejército Francés (October 1, 1928, Fojas 28-37); Métodos Generales de Instrucción del 1^{er}. Regimiento de Ingenieros Francés (November 17, 1928, Fojas 41-59); and Organización de la Escuela Militar de Ingenieros de Francia (June 10, 1929, Fojas 61-70).

¹⁴Ibid., Fojas 43-44, and 51.

¹⁵Ibid., Foja 70b.

created under your orders, who, with full effort and resolve, look for new sources of renovation and improvement in benefit of that [Mexican] army, which with such self-sacrifice you have taught us to love.¹⁶

Once in the École Supérieure de Guerre, Alamillo Flores continued to provide Amaro with status reports and military publications, but nothing that directly addressed Amaro's main concern with creating an advanced school for training staff officers. Finally, in July 1930, after spending more than half a year at the school, Alamillo Flores sent his mentor a detailed, 49-page document entitled "Report on the organization and operation of France's Escuela Superior de Guerra."¹⁷ The comprehensive report included information on the school's curriculum, organization and mission, admission requirements, and general administration. While he discussed each of these areas in some depth, it was clearly the section on the school's curriculum that most animated Alamillo Flores, for in examining this section, he saw the great potential that such a school could play in unifying the Mexican military through the teaching of a common doctrine. In concluding the section on the curriculum, Alamillo Flores stated:

Its [referring to the École Supérieure de Guerre] creative influence in the progress of military science . . . invites us to reflect on the importance that an educative center of such sort can offer to bring to a happy end the entire organization of a young army such as ours.

Its unity of doctrine, derived from its unity of learning . . . leads undeniably to the unification of command . . .

And is this not exactly what our army needs? Is not the unity of doctrine . . . that which much guide the effort towards the same end, that which is anxiously awaited to coordinate the values which, [if] left dispersed, would not represent the homogeneity and true importance they have?

¹⁶"Y mi satisfacción aumenta . . . porque somos nosotros, los creados bajo las órdenes de usted, quienes con todo esfuerzo y voluntad, buscamos nuevas fuentes de renovación y de mejoramiento en beneficio de ese Ejército que con tanta abnegación nos ha enseñando usted a querer." Letter from Alamillo Flores to Amaro, December 8, 1929, *ibid.*, Legajo 2, Foja 80.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, Fojas 92-145.

The object of this report has been to present to our leaders in a concise and clear form, boiled down to the purely indispensable, the principles which govern the organization of this military school, which teaches us so many practical and useful things¹⁸

In 1931, during Alamillo Flores' final year at the École Supérieure de Guerre, Amaro wrote his young protégé and notified him that he would soon be named director of Mexico's very own Escuela Superior de Guerra.¹⁹ Alamillo Flores, genuinely honored at having been chosen, quickly answered Amaro, promising to dedicate his remaining time to studying and preparing himself for his new position, and thus add his "small grain of sand to the great work" begun by Amaro.²⁰ Alamillo Flores wasted no time thinking about how to structure Mexico's newest military school, for attached to his letter thanking Amaro was a detailed report outlining his thoughts on how to best organize it. The report covered five main areas: teaching methods (in which Alamillo Flores stressed theory, the use of historical case studies, group seminars, and practical application exercises), faculty selection, student selection, school resources, and daily operations.²¹ Several weeks later, Alamillo Flores drafted a second report detailing the Escuela

¹⁸"Su [the school's] influencia creadora en el progreso de la ciencia militar . . . nos invita a reflexionar sobre la importancia que un centro educativo de tal índole puede presentar para llevar a feliz término la completa organización de un Ejército joven como es el nuestro.

"Su unidad de doctrina, derivada de su unidad de enseñanza . . . conduce incontestablemente a la unificación del mando . . .

"¿Y no es justamente lo que nuestro Ejército necesita? ¿No es la unidad de doctrina que . . . debe encauzar el esfuerzo hacia un mismo fin, lo que ansiosamente se espera para coordinar valores que disgregados no representan la homogenidad y verdadera importancia que ellos tienen?

"Presentar a nuestros jefes en forme concisa y clara, extractado a lo puramente indispensable, los principios que rigen la organización de esta Escuela Militar, que nos enseña tantas cosas prácticas y útiles, tal ha sido el objeto de este informe" Ibid., Fojas 109-110.

¹⁹Letter from Amaro to Alamillo Flores, April 17, 1931, *ibid.*, Legajo 3, Foja 148.

²⁰" . . . al aportar mi pequeño grano de arena a la magna obra emprendida por usted." Letter from Alamillo Flores to Amaro, May 15, 1931, *ibid.*, Fojas 150-151.

²¹"Linamientos Generales para la Organización de la Escuela Superior de Guerra," *ibid.*, Fojas 152-167.

Superior de Guerra's admission requirements, various types of entrance exams, procedures for scoring the exams, and several other admission policies which Amaro eventually adopted.²²

As Alamillo Flores neared the end of his tour in France, he wrote Amaro asking for permission to spend six months in the United States to better understand the American concept of war and military strategy, and to compare it with that of France. "To know the neighboring country, friend or enemy, will give us great advantages," wrote Alamillo Flores, "not only through a better understanding of a [cultural] environment that is indispensable to penetrate, but also through the opportunity it will give us to compare two races, two mentalities, two different educations"²³ Having received permission to extend his overseas tour, Alamillo Flores graduated from the École Supérieure de Guerre in July 1931, and arrived in the United States later that same month.²⁴ Not surprisingly, Alamillo Flores spent the majority of his stay visiting various military schools, including the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the U.S. Command and General Staff College, located at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.²⁵ While at West Point, Alamillo Flores inquired about the Military Academy's application process, entrance requirements, curriculum, teaching methods, and honor code. During his visit to the Command and General Staff College, the Mexican visitor found that both the French and the Americans

²²"Instrucciones para el Concurso de Admisión a la Escuela Superior de Guerra," *ibid.*, Fojas 170-185.

²³"Conocer el país vecino, amigo o enemigo, nos daría grandes ventajas, no sólo por el mejor conocimiento de un medio que nos es indispensable penetrar, sino por la oportunidad que se nos daría para comparar dos razas, dos mentalidades, dos educaciones diferentes" Letter from Alamillo Flores to Amaro, March 10, 1931, *ibid.*, Fojas 145-146.

²⁴Letter from Amaro to Alamillo Flores, April 10, 1931 *ibid.*, Foja 147; and letter from Alamillo Flores to Amaro, September 3, 1931, Foja 196.

²⁵Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 412-416.

essentially employed the same teaching methods, although he remained greatly impressed with the American school's modern facilities and vast material resources, particularly when compared to that of France. In the end, Alamillo Flores believed that his visit to the United States proved very beneficial, and after studying the military schools in both France and the U.S., he found that both nations had structured their schools essentially around similar principles. Although his experiences overseas had answered the basic question of how to structure Mexico's own Escuela Superior de Guerra, Alamillo Flores still remained somewhat apprehensive:

“... the problem resided in knowing how to adapt to the environment in which one was going to transplant [the school]. That is to say, our school, in the most fundamental [sense], would not be the same as any other, because ... it must find the doctrine that, in its future existence, would be for it distinctive and decisive.”²⁶

Defining a doctrine to guide the army's future development would, in fact, prove critical to Amaro's program of professionalizing the Mexican military and reducing its role in government politics. Yet by the time Alamillo Flores returned to Mexico in early 1932, Amaro's ability to continue his military reform program lay in jeopardy, for in the tumultuous environment of Mexico's ever-shifting political landscape, Amaro had resigned as Secretary of War.

Amaro's Political Rise and Fall

To talented, driven, and fortunate individuals such as Amaro, the Mexican Revolution proved to be not a source of misery and destruction—as it had for so many others—but rather the means by which one could aspire to an elite status within Mexican

²⁶“... el problema residía en saberlo adaptar el medio en donde se iba a trasplantar. Es decir, que nuestra Escuela, en lo fundamental, no tendría parecido con ninguna otra ... debería encontrar la doctrina que en el porvenir de su existencia le sería peculiar y determinante.” Ibid., 416.

society. Climbing through the ranks of the Mexican Army to reach the top post of Secretary of War in 1925, Amaro had clearly achieved this elite status. At Calles' request, Amaro, now married with two children, moved his family into the luxurious quarters located at Rancho de la Hormiga—a ten-acre ranch located in Chapultepec Park in the heart of Mexico City.²⁷ Given his love for horses and sports, Amaro furnished his ranch with stables, polo fields, fronton (a sport similar to racquet ball) and tennis courts, firing ranges, and a swimming pool, as well as his office and a school for his troops.²⁸ When Alamillo Flores first visited Amaro's quarters, he commented on the strong fragrance drifting from the roses and jasmines that adorned the general's quarters, the great sense of activity emanating from soldiers attending to their duties, and the impressive entrance Amaro made when he rode up on his grand horse, *La Sultana* (The Sultan).²⁹ Almost daily, Amaro rode *La Sultana* or any one of his numerous horses about the spacious ranch, frequently accompanied by his wife, Elisa, who would also join him for a rigorous game of tennis or fronton.³⁰ Amaro supplemented his spacious ranch by purchasing various properties in Mexico City, and in the states of Jalisco, Mexico, and

²⁷Since 1935, beginning with the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, the residence at Rancho de la Hormiga, now known as Los Pinos, has served as the home of Mexico's presidents. At the age of thirty, Amaro married twenty-one year old Elisa Izaguirre, originally from Morelia, Michoacán, and daughter of Colonel Manuel Izaguirre, an officer in Amaro's unit. The couple married on September 3, 1921 in Saltillo, Coahuila, during Amaro's tenure as Chief of Military Operations for the 3rd Military Zone. See AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 8, Foja 1966. In addition to the Amaro's eldest son and daughter, Joaquín and Leonor, the family would add three more children, Guillermo, Manuel, and Elisa, during their stay at Rancho de la Hormiga. According to Loyo, Rancho de la Hormiga measured 40,000 square meters, or approximately 9.88 acres. See Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*, 147.

²⁸Fernando Muñoz Altea and Magdalena Escobosa Hass de Rangel, *La Historia de la Residencia Oficial de Los Pinos* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988), 126.

²⁹Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 255-256.

³⁰Muñoz Altea and Escobosa Hass de Rangel, *La Historia de la Residencia Oficial de Los Pinos*, 126.

Durango, where, in the case of the later, he raised numerous livestock, including purebred horses.³¹

While the position of Secretary of War provided Amaro and his family with many of the comforts denied most Mexicans, the country's turbulent political situation presented the young general with constant challenges. The previously mentioned Gómez-Serrano rebellion in 1927 proved Amaro's first significant challenge, and stemmed directly from the unresolved problem of presidential succession that had plagued Mexico since the outbreak of the Revolution. Each of Mexico's presidents since the fall of Huerta in 1914—Carranza, Obregón, and Calles—had quite literally fought their way into the presidency. Now, with Calles' term coming to an end in 1928, Generals Arnulfo Gómez and Francisco Serrano appeared ready to shoot their way into office as well.³² Of course, neither general, perhaps with some justification, would have characterized their actions in such stark terms. In reality, both had reason to believe that they stood next in line for the presidency. Obregón had initially given Serrano, his former Secretary of War, the impression that he would succeed Calles, although the powerful ex-president later withdrew his support once he saw that Serrano, fresh from an 18 month tour in Europe, had not tamed his destructive drinking and gambling addiction.³³ Similarly, Calles had informed Gómez that should Obregón block Luis Morones, the influential labor leader, from the presidency, the nation's highest office

³¹Loyo, *Joaquín Amaro*, 147.

³²For the most comprehensive account of this rebellion in English, see Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 332-354. For an extensive account in Spanish, see Ignacio A. Richkarday, *60 años en la vida de México*, vol. 2 (México, D.F., 1963), 149-290.

³³Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 96.

would most likely fall to Gómez.³⁴ In the end, Obregón, still Mexico's most powerful *caudillo* at the time, decided that only he himself was worthy of succeeding Calles. As if anticipating the inevitable showdown to come, Amaro issued a circular in April 1927 warning all members of the military to either give up politics or resign from the army.³⁵ Although Gómez and Serrano did in fact take a leave of absence to organize their presidential campaigns, they soon concluded that Obregón would never risk a possible loss by providing for fair elections at the ballot box. In their view, armed rebellion remained the only option.

As previously discussed, the plot to capture Obregón, Calles, and Amaro at Balbuena Field failed completely.³⁶ However, neither Calles nor Amaro wanted a repeat of the large-scale de la Huerta rebellion, and thus moved quickly to eliminate Serrano and Gómez before any outbreak of hostilities. In the early morning hours of October 3, 1927, forces loyal to the government quickly tracked down Serrano and several followers in a hotel in Cuernavaca, taking them into custody without incident. Back in Mexico City, Calles, with Amaro's full cooperation, issued a set of orders to General Claudio Fox, who, upon reading them, simply stated, "Your orders will be carried out, *Señor Presidente*." Shortly thereafter, Fox's men left for Cuernavaca, and, upon encountering the rebel prisoners near the town of Huitzilac, promptly took Serrano and his men into the nearby woods and executed them.³⁷ One month later, General José Gonzalo Escobar

³⁴Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 333.

³⁵Sheffield, Mexico, NAW, RG 59, M274, 812.00/28312, April 7, 1927.

³⁶See Chapter IV.

³⁷Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 349-351. Eleven years later, in response to a formal government inquiry into Serrano's execution, Amaro responded: "I knew of the capture of Serrano and [his] partners, because the President told me so, ordering me to provide General Claudio Fox an escort. It is true that I

tracked down Gómez hiding in a cave near the town of Jalapa, Veracruz. After a brief trial, Gómez suffered the same fate as Serrano, as he was immediately executed.³⁸

With the rebellion essentially over before it started, Obregón handily won his re-election bid for the presidency, which took place on July 1, 1928. With a strong, proven leader and long-time friend returning to lead the nation, Amaro undoubtedly looked forward to several years of relative peace and political stability. As luck would have it, this period of peace and political stability lasted approximately two weeks. On the afternoon of July 17, a young man by the name of José de León Toral, posing as an artist, gained entrance to a banquet given in Obregón's honor. Although some of Obregón's advisors had cautioned the president-elect against making such a public appearance, Obregón appeared in good humor, laughing at a joke that any bombs that might go off would merely be small ones, since the name of the restaurant hosting the banquet was *La Bombilla* (small bomb).³⁹ At some point during the dinner, Toral made his way to the rear of the head table, getting close enough to show Obregón his sketches. Shifting the sketch pad to his left hand, Toral pulled out a pistol with his right and quickly put five

provided my automobile to General Fox In respect to the death of said gentlemen [Serrano and his followers], General Fox has already stated all that he knows and it is true that I called him [Fox] and brought him before the President; I knew later from the President himself that he had given orders that the rebels would be executed. Upon becoming aware of these orders, my opinion was and continues being that the President of the Republic acted with complete justification."

The original Spanish version of Amaro's words is as follows: "Yo supe de la captura de Serrano y socios, porque el señor Presidente me lo comunicó, ordenándome que se proporcionara al General Claudio Fox un escolta. Es cierto que yo facilité mi automóvil al General Fox Respecto de la muerte de dichos señores, ya el General Fox ha declarado todo lo que sabe y es cierto que yo lo llamé y lo introduje ante el señor Presidente; posteriormente supe por el propio alto mandatario que había dado órdenes de que los rebeldes fueran pasados por las armas. Al conocer yo estas órdenes, mi opinión fué y sigue siendo que el C. Presidente de la República obró con entera justificación."

Letter from Amaro dated March 1, 1938, ACT-AJA, Serie 0507, Presidencia de la República y Secretarías de Estado, Expediente Francisco R. Serrano y Arnulfo R. Gómez.

³⁸Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 353.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 366-367.

bullets into the unsuspecting caudillo at point blank range. A witness watched in horror as he saw Obregón's eyes grow enormous and his body slump forward onto the table.⁴⁰

With Obregón's sudden death, the potential for ruinous divisions among the army generals, or even outright rebellion, loomed large, as the near unanimous support that Obregón enjoyed within the military suddenly proved irrelevant. Would some generals, those known as dedicated obregonistas, assume that Calles had ordered the assassination? Would others rally around Calles against such charges, immediately creating factions that could turn violent? Would still other generals urge powerful divisionarios, such as Amaro, to use their military might to impose order? None of these scenarios appeared unrealistic. For a brief time, however, the generals did present a remarkable display of unity and restraint, although it may have had more to do with keeping each other in check rather than with any genuine effort by the generals to surrender their personal ambitions for the presidency. Seeking to maintain order in the days after Obregón's assassination, Amaro published an open letter to his fellow officers "to continue on the path of effort and order that we have laid out for ourselves," since it was in critical situations such as this one that "the military element must assume the honorable attitude that distinguishes it, since to it corresponds the defense of the national interests."⁴¹ Calles followed this plea with an extraordinary meeting on September 5, 1928 of more than thirty of the

⁴⁰Ibid., 367-369.

⁴¹"... debemos seguir por el camino de trabajo y orden que nos hemos trazado, precisamente porque en circunstancias como las que hoy prevalecen es cuando el elemento militar debe asumir la actitud digna que le caracteriza, ya que a él directamente corresponde la defensa de los intereses nacionales." Letter from Amaro dated July 21, 1928. Reprinted in Froylán C. Manjarrez, *La jornada institucional*, vol. 1 (México, D.F.: Talleres Gráficos Editorial y Diario Oficial, 1930), 15-16.

nation's most powerful generals, including Amaro and ten other divisionarios.⁴² Calles repeatedly urged the generals to remain unified and not splinter into quarreling factions that would only destroy Mexico. In addition, Calles told the generals that, as a group, they had to agree on both a provisional president as well as an acceptable candidate for the presidential elections set to take place on November 20, 1929. However, to prevent divisions within the army and to insure a united front between the Congress and the army, Calles urged that none of the generals present themselves as a candidate, and that they support whatever candidate Congress designated.⁴³

In light of Calles' comments, the generals made quite a show of pronouncing their unity to each other and the nation, their trust that Calles would act in Mexico's best interest, and their commitment to abstain from seeking the office of the presidency. Although General Juan Andreu Almazán emphatically stated that he judged "any of the divisionarios more capable of occupying the presidency than any civilian," General Juan José Ríos had already placed his fellow officers in a difficult situation when he announced, ". . . no military chief should aspire to occupy the presidency. Those fellow generals who are also in agreement, please stand." Predictably, all the generals stood in unison.⁴⁴ In addition, Escobar, the general who had tracked down Gómez during the most recent rebellion, went so far as to proclaim:

⁴²In addition to Amaro, the other divisionarios present at the meeting were Francisco Urbalejo, Juan Andreu Almazán, Francisco R. Manzo, José Gonzalo Escobar, Jesús M. Aguirre, Roberto Cruz, Lázaro Cárdenas, Pedro Gabay, Jesús M. Ferreira, and Saturnino Cedillo. *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 44-46.

⁴⁴"cualquiera de los divisionarios están más capacitado para ocupar la Presidencia de la República que cualquier civil . . ." *Ibid.*, 64. ". . . ningún jefe militar debe aspirar a ocupar la Presidencia de la República. Los compañeros que estén de acuerdo también, que se pongan de pie." *Ibid.*, 59.

. . . I want to make clear that the barracks uprisings, the disturbances, etc., have already passed into history, that these words must not be mentioned between us, because I consider that the army has already given very clear proof, very extensively, of loyalty, discipline, subordination, and honor. We must no longer allow the word “uprising,” it should absolutely be banished.⁴⁵

For a period at least, peace did prevail, as Congress appointed Emilio Portes Gil, a civilian and prominent member of Calles’ cabinet, to serve as provisional president without objection from the generals. Nevertheless, flowery speeches of loyalty and obvious posturing by the generals ultimately meant little, for a mere six months after Escobar pronounced the end of future uprisings, he himself led a sizeable but ultimately unsuccessful rebellion that gained the support of at least eight other divisionarios. The Escobar rebellion proved much more significant than the previous Gómez-Serrano rebellion, as the generals ultimately amassed a force of some 17,000 soldiers, or approximately 28% of the army, and 13,000 irregulars.⁴⁶ Amaro, however, was not present to take the field against the rebels, for on February 17, 1929, just two weeks prior to the uprising, he suffered a serious injury when a hard rubber ball slammed into his left eye during a game of fronton. The blow proved so severe that Amaro temporarily renounced his position as Secretary of War to seek medical treatment at the Mayo Clinic

⁴⁵“ . . . quiero manifestar que los cuartelazos, las asonadas, etc., ya pasaron a la historia; que esas palabras ya no deben de sonar entre nosotros, porque considero que el Ejército ya han dado una prueba bien clara, bien amplia, de lealtad, de disciplina, de subordinación y de honradez. Ya no debemos de admitir la palabra “cuartelazo,” debe ser proscrita absolutamente.” Ibid., 60.

⁴⁶Emilio Portes Gil, *Quince años de política mexicana*, 2nd ed. (México, D.F.: Botas, 1941), 280; and Froylán C. Manjarrez, *La jornada institucional*, vol. 2 (México, D.F.: Talleres Gráficos Editorial y Diario Oficial, 1930), 30. The above two sources provide an extensive account of the Escobar rebellion in Spanish. For an excellent account in English, see Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 436-458. Of the several divisionarios who joined Escobar, five of them (Manzo, Aguirre, Cruz, Urbalejo, and Ferreira) had been present at the September 5, 1928 meeting with Calles.

in Rochester, Minnesota.⁴⁷ With the injured Amaro unable to carry out his duties, Calles took charge as Secretary of War during Amaro's three-month absence and effectively defeated the rebels.

Returning to Mexico and the position of Secretary of War on May 22, 1929, Amaro had thus far weathered not only two armed rebellions but also various political intrigues and crises of governmental succession that had resulted in several personnel changes to the presidential cabinet. Throughout his tenure as Secretary of War under Calles, Portes Gil, and Pascual Ortiz Rubio—who succeeded provisional President Portes Gil in February 1930—Amaro had not only managed to maintain his position as the army's top general, but also to gain a solid reputation as the disciplinarian who had brought order and professionalism to Mexico's military. In one of its expositions held at the *Palacio Nacional* (National Palace) in 1929, Mexico's National Geographic Institute extolled Amaro's achievements, stating that, thanks to his efforts, "the National Army is worthy of being qualified as a true defender of the nation's institutions and integrity."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Amaro received over 150 letters and telegrams from family and friends expressing their condolences and wishing Amaro a quick recovery. Perhaps the most remarkable telegram came from Will Rogers, the famous American actor and author, who evidently knew Amaro personally. During Amaro's trip to the U.S., Rogers wired Amaro, stating: TERRIBLE SORRY TO HEAR OF YOUR ACCIDENT AM WIRING ON THE MAYOS AT ROCHESTER TO FIX YOU UP HE IS FRIEND OF MINE BEST TO YOU AND BROTHER PEDRO VIVA POLO PELOTA NO BUENO. Roger's reference to polo stems from initial reports that mistakenly attributed the accident to a game of polo, instead of fronton, while *pelota* is the Spanish word for "ball." ACT-AJA, Serie 0314, Documentos de índole social, Expediente 5, Manifestaciones de interés por el estado de salud del General Joaquín Amaro, Legajo 1.

Despite their best efforts, the doctors at the Mayo Clinic could not save Amaro's left eye, and thus he wore a glass eye for the rest of his life. This situation often led to somewhat humorous solicitations from various manufacturers of glass eyes, such as the one in Chicago that suggested Amaro combine a visit to Chicago's 1934 World's Fair with a visit to their office where he could shop from the "largest assortment of shapes and shades in artificial eyes." The letter concluded with a last note of helpful advice: "You'll find it wise, also, to get an extra eye here, so that you need not be embarrassed or inconvenienced if your present one should break." Letter from Mager & Gougelmann, Inc. to Amaro, June 7, 1934, ACT-AJA, Archivo Familiar, Expediente General Joaquín Amaro.

⁴⁸ "... el Ejército Nacional es digno de ser calificado como un verdadero defensor de las instituciones nacionales y de la integridad patria." Primera Exposición Objetiva del Informe Presidencial,

During the Escobar rebellion, Calles himself recognized Amaro's achievements at military reform, congratulating him as he recovered from his eye injury on the army's success in defeating the rebels, even as another officer expressed his fear to Amaro that the injury would "endanger the titanic work of reconstruction and moralization undertaken by you in our glorious institution."⁴⁹ Prominent civilians also praised Amaro's achievements. After watching a military exercise at Balbuena Field in 1930, Gerardo Murillo (known more commonly as Dr. Atl), a longtime revolutionary who had once worked closely with Obregón, wrote Amaro an enthusiastic letter of support, stating that, "The miracle that you have accomplished—because it is a miracle to take our troops to the degree of discipline and elevation to which they can now be found—should be eulogized without reserve and without prejudice . . ."⁵⁰ Even American journalists covering post-revolutionary Mexico, such as Carleton Beals and Ernest Gruening, publicly credited Amaro with taming unruly generals and instilling a sense of discipline into the troops.⁵¹

November 3, 1928, ACT-AJA, Serie 0307, Presidencia de la República y Secretarías de Estado, Expediente 9, Correspondencia con Secretarías de Estado, Inventario 297, Legajo 10, Foja 748-758.

⁴⁹Telegram from Calles to Amaro dated March 11, 1929, ACT-AJA, Serie 0307, Presidencia de la República y Secretarías de Estado, Expediente 1, Correspondencia con el Presidente Plutarco Elías Calles, Inventario 289, Legajo 1, Fojas 55-56; ". . . perjudicar la obra titánica de reconstrucción y moralización emprendida por usted en nuestra gloriosa institución." Serie 0304, Agregados y Estudiantes Militares en el Extranjero, Expediente 31, Mayor Pedro Mercado, Inventario 261, Legajo 2, Foja 89.

⁵⁰"El milagro que usted ha realizado—porque es un milagro de llevar al grado de disciplina y de elevación en que se encuentran ahora nuestras tropas—debe ser elogiado sin reticencia y sin prejuicios" Letter from Dr. Atl to Amaro dated February 12, 1930, ACT-AJA, Serie 0307, Presidencia de la República y Secretarías de Estado, Expediente 9, Correspondencia con Secretarías de Estado, Inventario 297, Legajo 15, Foja 1038.

⁵¹Carleton Beals, "The Indian Who Sways Mexico's Destiny," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1930; and Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, 323. Mexican politicians contemporary with Amaro, such as Portes Gil and Manjarrez, also gave Amaro great credit for transforming the army into a professional, disciplined force. See Portes Gil, *Quince años de política mexicana*, 242-245; and Manjarrez, *La jornada institucional*, vol. 2, 8.

By all measures, Amaro had risen to the top of his profession, accomplishing the herculean task of restructuring the military while surviving Mexico's turbulent political environment. Indeed, Amaro had steadily progressed over the years from his standing as a loyal general working in the shadow of his more famous superiors to become a genuine political force in his own right. Certainly, the numerous letters Amaro received urging him to run for the presidency in the wake of Obregón's assassination served as one of the surest signs of Amaro's formidable political power. Typical of the numerous letters sent to Amaro, General Salvador González wrote:

. . . we have settled on you, so that you might substitute [for Obregón], since we believe without fear of being wrong that you will continue sustaining the revolutionary principles In the case that you accept your candidacy, you can be secure that this region is completely at your orders.⁵²

The fact that many of these letters came from generals is significant, since any guarantee for regional support, such as the one given above, unmistakably implied that such generals stood ready to provide military support as well. Even after Portes Gil's selection as provisional president in September 1928, letters continued to arrive urging Amaro to run in the next presidential elections. In truth, had Amaro decided to use the army to force his way into the presidency, he would have had sizeable military support.

Remarkably, however, Amaro answered all of these appeals with a polite but firm no:

With respect to the efforts in favor of my candidacy, I must make clear to you that it is not possible for me to accept nor authorize any of them in that sense, since I have never thought to dedicate my activities to politics.⁵³

⁵²“ . . . nos hemos fijado en usted, para que los sustituya, pues creemos sin temer de equivocarnos que usted, segirá [sic] sosteniendo los principios revolucionarios” Letter from General Salvador González to Amaro, August 8, 1928, ACT-AJA, Archivo Familiar, Expediente General Joaquín Amaro.

⁵³“Respecto de trabajos en favor de mi candidatura, debo manifestar a Ud. que no me es posible aceptar ni autorizar ninguno de ellos en tal sentido ya que no he pensado nunca en dedicar mis actividades a la política.” Letter from Amaro to General de Brigada Francisco González, August 13, 1928, *ibid.*

Although Calles had not occupied the presidency since November 1928, his influence within the ruling government circles remained enormous. In fact, Calles' ability to continue directing Mexican politics from "behind the throne" of politically weaker presidents, such as Portes Gil and Ortiz Rubio, had earned him the unofficial title of *Jefe Máximo* (Maximum Chief).⁵⁴ Thus, from Calles' perspective, Amaro's growing political stature, combined with his powerful position within the military, made him a potential rival. Indeed, with Calles no longer president, Amaro's habit of expressing loyalty and support to the person occupying the presidency may have caused Calles to doubt Amaro's personal loyalty to him. For example, during Portes Gil's rather public dispute with Morones (the leader of the powerful labor union, CROM) in December 1928, Amaro reportedly told Portes Gil:

Mr. President, I have seen in the press the attacks that they have made against you at the CROM convention, in the presence of General Calles. I do not know if he supports such attacks, but I wish to express to you that whatever might be the conduct that General Calles follows, I know that my duty as a soldier and as Secretary of War is to be at your orders, as Chief of the Executive Power [i.e., President], and ready to face head on whatever situation that presents itself.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 394-395.

⁵⁵"Señor Presidente, he visto por la prensa los ataques que se han hecho a usted en la Convención de la CROM, en presencia de mi general Calles. Yo no sé si él se solidarice con tales ataques; pero deseo expresar a usted que cualquiera que sea la conducta que siga mi general Calles, yo sé que mi deber de soldado y de Secretario de Guerra es estar a las órdenes de usted, como Jefe del Poder Ejecutivo, y listo para hacer frente a cualquier situación que se presente." Portes Gil, *Quince años de política mexicana*, 363-365. CROM is the acronym for Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (Mexican Worker Regional Confederation)

Richkarday disputed the claim that Amaro would side with Portes Gil against Calles, since "Amaro always agreed with the policies of [Calles] down to the smallest details." ("... Amaro siempre estuvo de acuerdo con la política de don Plutarco hasta en sus menores detalles.") See Richkarday, *60 años en la vida de México*, vol. 2, 374-375. Regardless of Amaro's actual position, the mere perception that Amaro might have expressed his loyalty and support to Portes Gil, due to his position as president, may have been sufficient to worry Calles.

Once Ortiz Rubio became president in November 1930, Calles' growing dispute with the new president over agrarian policies, a symptom of the larger issue concerning Ortiz Rubio's ability to set policies independent of Calles' approval, quickly involved those in cabinet positions, including Amaro. Evidently, Calles worried that Amaro and Ortiz Rubio secretly planned to stage a military coup against him and his supporters, even while supporters of Ortiz Rubio feared that Amaro and the other generals serving in the cabinet—Cárdenas, Almazán, and Cedillo—were staunch *callistas* (supporters of Calles).⁵⁶ Ironically, Ortiz Rubio also worried that Amaro might confront Calles, fearing not only the destruction that such a protracted and bloody civil war would produce, but, perhaps worse, Amaro's ultimate triumph and inevitable claim to the presidency. Believing that Mexico had seen enough of powerful generals as presidents, Ortiz Rubio deemed that an Amaro victory would prove disastrous for Mexico, since the general possessed a mentality that was "100% military."⁵⁷

With both Calles and Ortiz Rubio somewhat suspicious of the long-time Secretary of War, Amaro probably had little chance of surviving the cabinet crisis of October 1931 that inevitably led to his resignation. Calles, having received numerous anonymous tips that Amaro was planning either to assassinate him or overthrow Ortiz Rubio, notified the president of Amaro's purportedly sinister plans.⁵⁸ Perhaps more fearful of Amaro's potential political clout than of Calles' overt attempts to manipulate the office of the

⁵⁶Tzvi Medin, *El minimato presidencial: historia política del maximato, 1928-1935* (México: Ediciones Era, 1982), 104-106; and Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 523. In addition to Amaro, who obviously served in the cabinet as Secretary of War, Cárdenas occupied the position of Secretary of the Interior, Almazán served as Secretary of Communications and Public Works, and Cedillo held the position of Secretary of Agriculture.

⁵⁷Medin, *El minimato presidencial*, 110.

⁵⁸Ibid., 106-107, Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 523.

president, Ortiz Rubio allowed Calles to handle the situation without his involvement. Thus, on October 13, 1931, Calles met with various cabinet members, minus Amaro, to discuss the crisis. Cárdenas suggested that all four generals currently in the cabinet resign so as not to make it obvious that the crisis centered around Amaro. Having agreed to the suggestion, Calles held a meeting with several cabinet members (including all four generals) the following day at Amaro's home. After some discussion, all four agreed to resign.⁵⁹ The following day, after an unprecedented period of more than six years as Mexico's Secretary of War, Amaro submitted his formal resignation to Ortiz Rubio:

I have the honor of writing you in this moment of proof for the constitutional government over which you honorably preside, to make clear with my customary sincerity and respect, that deeming it patriotic to facilitate for you a solution to the political crisis that has presented itself, I formally resign, irrevocably, from the honorable position of Secretary of War, imploring you to be kind enough to accept my profound gratitude for the honors you have given me, and particularly for your absolute confidence in my loyalty and subordination which, as Chief of the National Army, I am pleased to extend towards you as the legitimate President of the nation.⁶⁰

Amaro Establishes the Escuela Superior de Guerra

At first glance, one might logically assume that Amaro's tenure as Secretary of War represented the peak years of his military career, and that, with his abrupt

⁵⁹Medin, *El minimato presidencial*, 108; and Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 524-525.

⁶⁰“Tengo la honra de dirigirme a usted en este momento de prueba para el gobierno constitucional que dignamente preside, para manifestarle con mi habitual sinceridad y respeto, que estimando patriótico facilitar a usted la solución de la crisis política que se ha presentado, hago formal dimisión, con carácter irrevocable, del honroso cargo de Secretario de Guerra y Marina, suplicando a usted que se sirva aceptar mi profundo agradecimiento por las distinciones de que me ha hecho objeto y particularmente por su absoluta confianza en mi lealtad y subordinación que como Jefe del Ejército Nacional me satisface tener para usted como el legítimo Primer Magistrado de la Nación. Letter from Amaro to Ortiz Rubio, October 15, 1931, ACT-AJA, Serie 0307, Presidencia de la República y Secretarías de Estado, Expediente 3, Correspondencia con el Presidente Pascual Ortiz Rubio, Inventario 291, Legajo 4, Foja 232.

resignation in 1931, he could no longer continue his program of military reform. Strictly speaking, Amaro had indeed reached the pinnacle of his career during his term as Secretary of War. Yet, in many ways, his ability to influence the nature of Mexico's military reform and institute genuine and long-lasting changes had just begun. Perhaps recognizing the true importance of his predecessor's accomplishments, Calles, serving as the new Secretary of War, appointed Amaro Director of the Colegio Militar effective December 1, 1931. This position now placed him much closer to those institutions of military education that he had identified early on as the real key to successful military reform.⁶¹ In truth, if Amaro resented having to resign from his previous position, he gave little indication of it, for in his first address to the staff of the Colegio Militar, he stated, "Today is realized the greatest of my desires as a soldier, to take charge of . . . this College."⁶² Of course, one might expect such lofty sentiments from a public speech. Still, in one of Amaro's few surviving personal notes—he kept a copy of the speech—he added as a preface his own personal thoughts: "With fondness I remember the solemn act in which I took charge as Director of the Colegio Militar. It was truly the crystallization of one of my dreams."⁶³

Perhaps one of the reasons Amaro looked forward to taking over as the Director of the Colegio Militar was that he had already planned to greatly expand this position.

⁶¹Document dated November 26, 1931, ACT-AJA, Serie 04, Director General de Educación Militar, 1931-1935, Notas Personales.

⁶²"Hoy se realiza el más grande de mis anhelos de soldado, al hacerme cargo, por disposición del señor Presidente de la República, de al Dirección de este Colegio." "Palabras del General de División Joaquín Amaro al hacerse cargo de la Dirección del Colegio Militar," December 1, 1931, ACT-AJA, Serie 04, Director General de Educación Militar, 1931-1935, Notas Personales.

⁶³"Con especialidad recuerdo el acto solemne en que me hice cargo de la Dirección del Colegio Militar, el 1/o. de diciembre de 1931. Fué realmente la cristalización de uno de mis sueños." ACT-AJA, Serie 0514, Campaña Política, Expediente 1, Artículos, conferencias, discursos, ensayos, ponencias, proyectos, reformas.

Only two weeks after taking command, Amaro formally requested that the Department of the Colegio Militar be renamed the Department of Military Education, and, consequently, that his department assume control of all military schools, including any future ones that the military might establish.⁶⁴ As justification, Amaro pointed out that each of the various military schools, such as the *Escuela Naval Militar* (Military Naval School), the *Escuela Médico Militar* (Military Medical School), and the *Escuela de Transmisiones* (Signals School), all reported to different departments within the military, and thus lacked a unified sense of purpose, standardized learning objectives, and common entrance standards. In addition, some of the schools staffed their classrooms with poorly trained instructors, and proved woefully behind in using the latest teaching techniques and textbooks. Finally, Amaro argued that with so many different departments involved in running their own schools, they inevitably duplicated functions and thus increased the cost of maintaining these schools.⁶⁵

Amaro's proposal won approval, and having successfully broadened his position to include oversight of all military schools, he then set out to finish the task he had begun with Alamillo Flores back in 1928, the creation of the Escuela Superior de Guerra. On January 1, 1932, Amaro requested and received permission from Ortiz Rubio to establish the Escuela Superior de Guerra, Mexico's first school of advanced military studies, for the specific purpose of training officers to fill positions of command and serve on the

⁶⁴Letter from Amaro to Ortiz Rubio, December 15, 1931, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 9, Correspondencia con la Escuela Superior de Guerra.

⁶⁵Ibid.

general staff.⁶⁶ With the school slated to open that April, Amaro and Alamillo Flores, recently promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and appointed the school's first director, worked feverishly to establish admission requirements and create a plan of studies before the start of classes. On January 24, Amaro published the school's admission criteria: applicants had to be between the ages of 25 and 38, hold the rank of Lieutenant through Major, have at least two years of experience at the corps level, and pass an admissions test.⁶⁷ The test itself consisted of two exams, a written exam covering such topics as command and staff procedures, military history, literature, philosophy, and geography, and an oral exam that tested knowledge of the various branches of the army, as well as fluency in either English or French. Lastly, the candidates had to take an equestrian skills test and pass a medical exam.

Soon after settling on the admission requirements, Amaro and Alamillo Flores drafted a preliminary plan of studies that outlined the Escuela Superior de Guerra's general teaching philosophy and course offerings.⁶⁸ Essentially, the school would build its three-year program around four main areas: strategic and tactical military studies, technical studies, foreign languages, and physical training. Of these four main areas, the first, strategic and tactical military studies, received the most attention from Amaro's

⁶⁶Letter from Amaro, January 1, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 9, Correspondencia con la Escuela Superior de Guerra; Letter from Ortiz Rubio, January 1, 1932, *ibid.*

⁶⁷"Instrucciones para el concurso de admisión a la Escuela Superior de Guerra," January 24, 1932, *ibid.* The following year, Amaro modified the admissions requirements, allowing Lieutenant Colonels to apply, requiring officers to have at least five years of commissioned service, and mandating all candidates to pass an IQ test with a minimum score of 115. See "Convocatoria para el concurso de admisión a la Escuela Superior de Guerra," October 1, 1933, *ibid.*

⁶⁸"Plan General de Enseñanza de la Escuela Superior de Guerra," January 26, 1932, *ibid.* This particular plan was only a draft, and the plan itself did not appear in final form until July 1, 1932. A copy of the final plan can be found in *La Escuela Superior de Guerra: sus principios, sus modalidades y sus métodos*, 29-38. A later version of this same plan, dated August 26, 1932, and with only slight changes in wording, is included in Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 427-435.

plan, a natural expectation given that Amaro considered this area the “foundation of military learning,” and key to preparing his officers for positions of command and for the conduct of warfare in general. The plan further elaborated that those courses devoted to military strategy must emphasize warfare as an art, and, as such, stress the distinction between war planning and its actual execution. In contrast, those courses applicable to military tactics would focus on warfare as a science, and thus cover topics specifically devoted to tactical battlefield units, such as the infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Amaro also intended for these military and strategy courses to build on each other, with students gradually learning throughout their three years of study to solve problems and conduct maneuvers, ranging from individual unit exercises to multi-service campaigns. Lastly, in addition to examining the art and science of warfare, this area also included courses covering geography, military history, fortifications, topography, naval warfare, gas warfare, and foreign militaries.

Technical studies, which examined the underlying national and international structures that made modern warfare possible, appeared as the next most important area of learning covered in Amaro’s plan. Within the general topic of technical studies, Amaro listed four main areas of focus: politics, military law, technology and industry, and national resources. In addition to grasping the fundamentals of military strategy and tactics, the plan specified that officers must understand the manner in which a nation’s political and economic structure related to modern warfare, as well as the manner in which international politics and conventions of military law affected the conduct of war. According to the plan, such an understanding would serve as an “indispensable compliment” to the Mexican officer’s educational experience and understanding of war,

an especially important point given Amaro's expectation that graduates of the Escuela Superior de Guerra occupy positions of command and serve on the general staff. Finally, the plan of studies also included foreign language courses—with all students obligated to learn English and French—and physical training, which included classes in equestrian, gymnastics, and various team sports.

Like the cadets at the Colegio Militar, the first-year students at the Escuela Superior de Guerra adhered to a rigorous daily schedule lasting from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Saturday.⁶⁹ After an hour-long breakfast, the students spent 90 minutes in physical training, typically practicing sports or horseback riding. From 9:00 – 9:50 AM, the students studied English or French, followed by an hour-long “military application” class in the areas of cavalry, infantry, engineering, aeronautics, topography, or artillery, depending on the officer's career specialty. Before breaking for lunch, the students squeezed in one more academic course in such areas as military history, strategy and tactics, military doctrine, international law, and geography. Training resumed again at 2:30 PM, although not in the classroom, as the students took to the field to participate in military exercises related to that day's lessons.⁷⁰ Training formally ended at 6:00 PM, with the remainder of the day devoted to dinner and studying. By 1934, Amaro and his staff had laid out a full program for second and third-year students as well.⁷¹ In addition

⁶⁹ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 9, Correspondencia con la Escuela Superior de Guerra. The information related to the students' daily schedule in this file is contained on oversized, color-coded charts pertaining to the academic schedules for the years 1932 and 1933. Both Amaro and Alamillo Flores signed each of these plans.

⁷⁰The academic plan for 1933 added an end-of-year naval deployment exercise to the coastal city of Veracruz.

⁷¹*Los Estudios de la Escuela Superior de Guerra* (Popotla, D.F.: Secretaría de Guerra y Marina, 1934), 73-175.

to taking advanced courses related to their career specialties, students in their second year of studies attended classes in naval strategy and tactics, general staff procedures, constitutional law, philosophy, and military ethics, while third-year students added courses on supply, fortifications, meteorology, gas warfare, and communications.

In addition to the scheduled courses, Alamillo Flores held numerous seminars designed to further both students and staff members in their knowledge and understanding of warfare. For example, Alamillo Flores gave a seminar entitled “War as Science and as Art,” in which he discussed both the scientific nature of warfare, particularly with regard to various principles of war, and the artistic quality of warfare, in which the officer would use his talent and creativity to apply these principles during battle.⁷² Throughout his presentation, Alamillo Flores exhibited great familiarity with the works of Europe’s most renowned military theorists, such as Antoine Henri Jomini, Karl von Clausewitz, and Helmuth von Moltke. Another staff member, Major Elíseo Martín del Campo, a pilot, held six separate conferences in 1934, including “The Air War, Decisive Factor in Border Conflicts,” “Principles for the Employment of the Air Force,” and “The Air Force in the Defense of the Coasts.”⁷³ Numerous other seminars in 1934 covered such topics as naval strategy during the Russo-Japanese War, military technology and industrial mobilization, bridge construction, night operations, aerial photography, the U.S.-Mexican border region, and military invasions via the Gulf of Mexico.

⁷²“La Guerra como Ciencia y como Arte,” October 6, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 9, Correspondencia con la Escuela Superior de Guerra.

⁷³“La Guerra Aérea, Factor Decisivo en las Luchas Fronteras,” “Principios para el Empleo de la Fuerza Aérea: los Principios de la Guerra, Aplicados al Arte Militar Aéreo,” and “La Fuerza Aérea en la Defensa de las Costas,” *ibid.* Similar to Alamillo Flores, del Campo showed great familiarity with air power theorists, especially the well-known Italian General, Giulio Douhet.

Given the nature of the courses and seminars offered by the Escuela Superior de Guerra, Amaro clearly desired that his officers focus their energies on military matters. In particular, Amaro recognized the need to have his officers study the problems and challenges associated with conducting warfare in the wake of the industrialized and technologically-oriented warfare that emerged after World War I. Furthermore, the increasingly sophisticated nature of warfare, as well as the time and effort required to master it, fit in well with Amaro's effort to pull the military away from the realm of politics and provide his officers with a bona fide military mission to replace the tradition of rebellion and lawlessness so prevalent among his officer corps. Thus, in the eyes of Amaro and Alamillo Flores, the critical role of the Escuela Superior de Guerra would reside in its ability to instill within the newer generation of officers a common doctrine that both unified the military and encouraged support for the government and its institutions. Concerning the importance of a unifying doctrine to guide the Mexican military, Amaro stated:

The government, with complete care, with complete thoroughness, imparts to each element of the army the necessary preparation to form a mentality that must converge to only one aspiration, with the goal that all of the men of the Revolution, who are now generals, colonels, and officers, have, as professionals, the same military doctrine, and with the same ideals that animated the men who were formed by the passion of the Revolution. That is why it is urgent that one is familiar with the military education process . . . ⁷⁴

⁷⁴“El Gobierno, con todo cuidado, con toda escrupulosidad, imparte a cada elemento del Ejército la preparación necesaria para formar una mentalidad que debe converger a una sola aspiración, con objeto de que los hombres de la Revolución, que ahora son Generales, Jefes y Oficiales, tengan, como profesionistas, una misma doctrina militar, pues con ello se realizará la unidad del Ejército, con la misma mentalidad y con los mismos ideales que animaron a los hombres que se formaron al calor de la Revolución. Por eso es urgente que se conozca el proceso de la Educación Militar . . . :” “El Ejército como Educador,” speech given by Amaro on September 21, 1935, ACT-AJA, Serie 04, Director General de Educación Militar, 1931-1935, Notas Personales.

Amaro's statement that the military's common doctrine must also reflect the ideals of the Mexican Revolution deserves further attention. Although the fighting associated with the Mexican Revolution had officially ended in 1917, each succeeding Mexican government continued to utilize, for its own political purposes, the rhetoric of the Revolution and the associated imagery of an ongoing struggle to improve the social and economic plight of the Mexican citizen.⁷⁵ Hence, in the language of Mexican politics, the Revolution had not really ended in 1917. Rather, it simply transitioned from its violent phase, conducted by revolutionary generals on the battlefield, to its "institutional" phase, now managed by government officials in the political arena. Similarly, Amaro appropriated that same imagery in his reference to a military doctrine that coincided with "the same ideals that animated . . . the Revolution." More specifically, Amaro recognized the critical need for the Escuela Superior de Guerra to unify his officers around a doctrine that supported the Mexican government in its ideological role as the embodiment of the "institutionalized" Revolution. In describing the role that the Escuela Superior de Guerra would play in forming a military doctrine unique to Mexico's situation, Alamillo Flores wrote:

. . . professionally, it was necessary to inspire that teaching . . . with a spiritual concept, profound and noble, that produced an absolute awareness that Mexico's Escuela Superior de Guerra was not going to become [an institution that simply] repeated poorly assimilated [ideas] from texts written in other countries, for other needs, and for other men.

The school would have to have its own soul, with its own ideals, [one] that could only find its inspiration in the spirit of the nation!

⁷⁵ Although the social, economic, and political success of the Mexican Revolution is open for debate, there is little argument that, apart from any tangible results, the Mexican government has consistently defined the Revolution as a continuous struggle to improve the social position of the Mexican populace, and to eliminate any political remnants associated with the dictatorial government of Porfirio Díaz. See Moisés González Navarro, "La Ideología de la Revolución," *Historia Mexicana* 10, no. 4 (April-June 1961): 628-636.

Thus was born the concept of a *Mexican doctrine of war*, in which those selected to study [in the Escuela Superior de Guerra] would have to interpret in the classrooms and execute in their military careers.⁷⁶

In defining the exact nature of this military doctrine, Amaro and Alamillo Flores first determined that the Mexican military would not launch an invasion against another country.⁷⁷ Specifically, Alamillo Flores wrote:

Carefully, we [Amaro and Alamillo Flores] studied the diverse economic and political factors that throughout our history have determined the social orientation of the nation; and taking into account that our people have always been respectful of the interests of all people and of the way people are, without ever thinking of seizures or conquests, we concluded to remove completely from our minds the possibility that some day Mexico could conduct, by itself, a war outside of its borders.

Since Mexico would not serve as the aggressor, Alamillo Flores then reasoned that the armed forces of any nation that did invade Mexico would, by necessity, be both militarily powerful and numerically superior. Against such overwhelming force, Alamillo Flores concluded that Mexico's military would need to employ a strategy he called the "subordinated offensive" (*ofensiva subordinada*), the goal being to prevent the enemy

⁷⁶"... profesionalmente, era necesario inspirar esa enseñanza . . . con un concepto espiritual, profundo y elevado, que diera la conciencia absoluta de que la Escuela Superior de Guerra de México, no iba a convertirse en repetidora mal digerida de textos hechos en otros países, para otras necesidades y para otros hombres.

"¡La Escuela debería tener su vida propia, con su propio ideal, que solamente podría inspirarse en el alma nacional!

"Así nació el concepto de una DOCTRINA MEXICANA DE GUERRA que deberían interpretar en las aulas y ejecutar en su vida militar, los seleccionados para estudiar en el plantel."

See Luis Alamillo Flores, *Doctrina Mexicana de Guerra*, XXI.

⁷⁷Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 421. Although Alamillo Flores did not provide a specific date in his memoirs, it appears that Amaro and Alamillo Flores made their determination against Mexico ever launching a foreign invasion in early 1932.

Alamillo Flores' exact words in Spanish were: "Cuidadosamente estudiamos los diversos factores de orden político y económico que a través de nuestra historia, han determinado la orientación social de la nación; y tomando en cuenta que nuestro pueblo siempre ha sido respetuoso de los intereses y de la manera de ser de todos los pueblos, sin pensar nunca en usurpaciones ni conquistas, concluimos en alejar por completo de nuestra mente la posibilidad de que algún día México pudiera llevar, por sí solo, la guerra fuera de sus fronteras."

from capturing Mexico City.⁷⁸ Yet the subordinated offensive did not comprise the primary, or even most prominent, aspect of Amaro's military doctrine. Amaro's understanding that Mexico's military doctrine had to reflect the ideals of the Revolution led to a unique feature in its development, the mission of civic action. In recalling Amaro's advice to his officers that Mexico's military schools should emphasize a doctrine based on civic action, Alamillo Flores reminisced:

I still remember with emotion how, in this fundamental aspect of [our] work, the authoritative voice of our chief, General Amaro, was [a] tireless source of institutional orientation that accorded with the most pure ideals of the Revolution. It is necessary, he would tell us, "that in the Mexican soldier, in any aspect of his life, as in every moment of his career, he distinguish himself by his untarnished affection towards the people who shape him"⁷⁹

The doctrine of civic action, which incorporated as part of the military's official mission public works—irrigation and flood control projects, road and school construction, telegraph line repairs, and other tasks of great benefit to the civilian population—apparently made an impression on Amaro during his tenure as Secretary of War. During a period of strong rains in the city of León, the resultant flooding and

⁷⁸Paper entitled "Nociones de Estrategia y Arte Militar," authored by Alamillo Flores and dated February 19, 1934, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 9, Correspondencia con la Escuela Superior de Guerra. This same essay is duplicated in Alamillo Flores' *Doctrina Mexicana de Guerra*, 53-72. In the essay, Amaro cited the capture of Mexico City by the Americans during the Mexican-American War, as well as Germany's failure to capture Paris during World War I, as proof that the key to victory lay in the defense of Mexico City.

Another interesting letter, probably written in first months of 1935, offered that the potential war between Italy and Ethiopia presented an excellent case study for Mexico to analyze closely. According to the letter, should Italy invade Ethiopia, the Ethiopians would have to fight a guerilla war against a better armed and better equipped army, and on terrain similar to that of Mexico. See ACT-AJA, , Serie 0402, Artículos, ensayos, iniciativas y Reglamentos del Ejército.

⁷⁹"Aún recuerdo con emoción que en este aspecto fundamental del trabajo, la autorizada voz de nuestro jefe, el señor general Amaro, fue manantial inagotable de orientación institucional de acuerdo con los más puros ideales de la Revolución. Es necesario, nos decía, "que en el soldado mexicano en cualquier aspecto de su vida, como en todo momento de su carrera, se caracterice por su acendrado cariño hacia el pueblo que lo forma" Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 421.

massive devastation prompted the federal government to send a team of civilians to restore order and provide medical care.⁸⁰ However, upon seeing first-hand the great level of destruction brought on by the flooding, Dr. Alfonso Priani, Mexico's Director of Health and head of the rescue effort, declared, "In this truly unfortunate situation, only the army will succeed in prevailing, we cannot."⁸¹ Amaro did send his military forces in, as doctors, supply personnel, engineers, and other service members began the difficult work of recovering the wounded and the dead, putting a halt to the looting, setting up temporary hospitals and lodging, clearing debris, rebuilding houses and roads, distributing supplies, and restoring a sense of order to the beleaguered city. When it came time for the army to leave, city and state government officials, distinguished medical personnel, and prominent ex-revolutionary officers all turned out for the grand farewell. Towards the end of the celebration, one of the doctors addressed Amaro, Alamillo Flores, and the other officers in attendance with a statement that struck Amaro as extremely profound: "for the first time in the history of Mexico, [the army], instead of killing, was saving lives."⁸²

Amaro clearly understood from this incident the great potential civic action held for establishing a bond between his soldiers and the nation's citizens, and, by extension, for reducing the military's long history of militarism. Throughout his remaining time as Secretary of War and as Director of Military Education, Amaro consistently emphasized the doctrine of civic action, not because it could ever prove useful for launching an attack

⁸⁰Alamillo Flores recounted this incident in his memoirs. Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 277-278. León is the one of the larger cities in the state of Guanajuato, located in central Mexico.

⁸¹"En esta situación, de verdadera desgracia, solamente el Ejército logrará imponerse, nosotros no podemos." Ibid., 277.

⁸²"... por primera vez en la historia de México, en lugar de matar salvaba vidas." Ibid., 278.

or defeating an invading military force, but precisely because it fostered a closer relationship between the soldier and the citizen, a necessary step if ever the military was to break its tradition of rebellion and disloyalty. For example, in 1930, Amaro wrote:

In general, the *campesinos* (field workers) do not see in the present-day army representatives of a praetorian army [or] armed enemies. On the contrary, they find [in the army] the genuine representation of the people . . . who . . . safeguard the interests of the people as something that is profoundly tied to themselves. The national army and the workers in the field form in itself a formidable alliance that will be difficult to destroy, because it is founded upon immutable revolutionary principles . . .⁸³

Additionally, just days before Amaro stepped down as Secretary of War in October 1931, he published similar thoughts in a newspaper article:

. . . the union of the national army with the agrarian elements is not a question of rights, but of fact And so, soldiers are lent for the construction of roads, dams, canals, schools, sports fields, and other works that benefit their agrarian brothers . . . wherever the military can do something beneficial for the people, there we will be found, always content, because that is our fundamental mission, the only reason for our existence as the national army, *to serve the people*.⁸⁴

Lastly, towards the end of his term as Director of Military Education in 1935, Amaro gave a speech in which he emphasized not only the close connection between the soldier

⁸³“Los campesinos en general, no ven en el Ejército de los días presentes, a los representantes de un Ejército pretoriano, a enemigos armados, sino por el contrario, encuentran la genuina representación del pueblo . . . que . . . salvaguardan los intereses del pueblo como algo que está profundamente ligado a sí mismos. El Ejército Nacional y los obreros del campo, forman en sí una alianza formidable que difícilmente podrá destruirse, porque está asentada sobre principios revolucionarios inmutables . . . Report entitled “El Ejército Nacional y las Conquistas de los trabajadores del campo,” authored by Amaro and dated April 29, 1930, ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 3, Documentos Relativo al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina.

⁸⁴“ . . . la unión del Ejército Nacional con los elementos agraristas no es cuestión de derecho, sino de hecho Y así, los soldados están prestos a la construcción de carreteras, presas, canales, escuelas, campos deportivos y otras obras que benefician a sus hermanos agraristas donde quiera que los militares puedan hacer algo provechoso para el pueblo, allí estaremos, siempre complacientes, porque esa es nuestra misión fundamental; la única razón de nuestra existencia como Ejército Nacional; SERVIR AL PUEBLO.” *El Nacional* (Mexico City), October 8, 1931.

and his counterparts in the fields and factories, but also the role that military education played in fostering this connection:

. . . I want to state before the army and before all the social classes of the country, the labor of military education that this department ends up developing, and that [this department] not only attends to the technical organization of the army of the Revolution, but [also] ensures that this [army] identifies with the *campesino* and the factory worker, since their ideas are common and at present have always been united.⁸⁵

In sum, the role the Escuela Superior de Guerra played in developing and reinforcing this doctrine became a critical part of Amaro's overall effort to create a loyal and professional military, for it was this doctrine that the school's graduates would take with them when they served on the general staff and in command positions. In a very real sense, the nation's newest and most prestigious military school served as a crucial step towards institutionalizing Amaro's vision for an army that supported, rather than threatened, the government. As the school that would see Mexico's most promising officer pass through its doors, the Escuela Superior de Guerra would ensure that, long after Amaro's departure, its graduates—the nation's future military leaders—would continue to be formed and influenced by the revolutionary doctrine of civic action. But this step, while critical, was only one of a number of steps Amaro took towards institutionalizing his vision of a loyal military. Having finally fulfilled his goal of establishing the Escuela Superior de Guerra, Amaro now looked to overhaul Mexico's entire system of military schools.

⁸⁵“ . . . quiero exponer ante el Ejército y ante todas las clases sociales del país, la labor de Educación Militar que esta Dirección viene desarrollando, y que no sólo tiende a la organización técnica del Ejército de la Revolución, sino a hacer que este se identifique con el campesino y el obrero, ya que sus ideas son comunes y en los momentos siempre han estado unidos.” “El Ejército como Educador,” speech given by Amaro on September 21, 1935, ACT-AJA, Serie 04, Director General de Educación Militar, 1931-1935, Notas Personales.

CHAPTER VII
OVERHAULING THE MILITARY SCHOOLS:
AMARO AS DIRECTOR OF MILITARY EDUCATION

Had Amaro reviewed his service record during his tenure as Director of Military Education, as he surely must have done at some point, he would have seen a lengthy series of notable military accomplishments: the rapid rise through the ranks from private to general; participation in a long list of campaigns battling the forces of Zapata, Huerta, Villa, and numerous others; a display of fierce bravery in the face of enemy fire at the battle of Celaya; and a hard-won victory at Ocotlán against the rebel Enrique Estrada. What his service record had not documented, however, was the strong commitment that Amaro displayed, beginning with his position as Commander of the 3rd and 7th Military Zones in the early 1920s, to using education as the means for reforming and professionalizing his forces. During that earlier phase of his career, Amaro had worried that, in spite of his efforts at reform, the army would remain as “morally bankrupt as the ex-Federal Army.”¹ Some ten years later, however, as Director of Military Education, Amaro spoke of the great transformation the army had undergone during these years, and of the important role that military education had played, and would continue to play, in this transformation:

Eliminating once and for all from the national scene the old Federal Army was thus necessary to forge a new military institution. . . . But, before

¹*El Universal* (Mexico City), May 7, 1925. See Chapter IV for the full context of this quote.

anything else, it was necessary to organize militarily, from a material point of view, this conglomeration of men, and afterwards came the time of raising it [the army] morally, giving it dignity, and, lastly, of educating and instructing it.²

In his speech, Amaro continued to explain that, given the great difference between Díaz's old Federal Army and the new National Army that had slowly evolved after the Mexican Revolution, it now made sense to substitute the term "military instruction" with the more meaningful "military education." Military instruction, explained Amaro, is what the Federal Army provided its new recruits upon their initial arrival into the ranks of the military, and included training the new troops in the operation of their weapons and teaching them the basic rules and regulations of military life. "And this," concluded Amaro, "is, in fact, the extent to which the old Mexican army limited its preparation."³ In contrast, the new army that emerged from the Revolution had undergone a process, under Amaro's guidance, of military education. As Amaro explained:

To educate, this is what the Revolution mandated be done with respect to the members of the new army. To educate, that is to say, to deposit and develop in the minds and spirits of their members . . . principles and knowledge, at the same time that they excite and develop, scientifically, their physical, moral, and intellectual abilities.⁴

To educate such a large army, and not merely provide it with basic instruction, added Amaro, required a great deal of forethought and planning. The Mexican military had to

²"Eliminando definitivamente del escenario nacional el antiguo Ejército Federal, era, pues, necesario forjar una nueva Institución Armada. . . . Pero antes que todo fué necesario organizar militarmente, desde el punto de vista material, a este conglomerado de hombres, y luego vino la hora de levantarlo moralmente, dignificándolo, y por último, de educarlo y de instruirlo." Speech given by Amaro entitled "La Revolución y la Educación Militar en México," ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 1, Documentos Incompletos. Although undated, Amaro's references to various events indicate he gave the speech sometime in 1933.

³"Y esto es, en realidad, a lo que se limitaba la preparación del antiguo Ejército mexicano." Ibid.

⁴"Educar, esto es lo que mandó la Revolución que se hiciera respecto de los miembros del nuevo Ejército. Educar, es decir, depositar y desarrollar en los ánimos y espíritus de sus componentes . . . principios y conocimientos; al mismo tiempo que se excitan y desenvuelven, científicamente, sus facultades físicas, morales e intelectuales." Ibid.

insure that its education program rested on a foundation of firm principles that pertained to all its members, both common soldiers and high-ranking officers. Furthermore, these principles had to serve as the basis for a common educational doctrine, a doctrine that each of the army's numerous military schools understood and followed.⁵ While Amaro recognized that the Mexican army had made great advances through the overhaul of the Colegio Militar and creation of the Escuela Superior de Guerra, he clearly wanted to reinvigorate all facets of the military's educational program and thus move the army beyond its current level of educational development. By 1932, as Mexico's first Director of Military Education, Amaro had positioned himself to do exactly that.

Amaro's Military Education Reorganization Plan

Although Amaro clearly had excelled during his long tenure as Secretary of War, he appeared to thrive all the more in his new position. Perhaps feeling a sense of freedom from the constant political intrigues that had characterized his later years as Secretary of War, Amaro now focused even more intently on the army's military schools, including the "moral and intellectual forces" they represented.⁶ From Amaro's perspective, these schools held great potential for furthering his program of reform and professionalization, but as currently organized, they neither provided a comprehensive military education nor operated from a common doctrinal foundation. For that reason, in March 1932, Amaro proposed a comprehensive plan for reorganizing the military's entire educational system,

⁵Ibid.

⁶In discussing the importance of the military schools, Amaro had stated, "But one must never lose sight of all the moral and intellectual forces represented by the different military schools . . ." Amaro's exact words in Spanish were: "Pero no debe perderse nunca de vista que todas las fuerzas morales e intelectuales representadas por las distintas Escuelas Militares . . ." Ibid.

a plan appropriately entitled the “General Military Education Reorganization Plan.”⁷ In reorganizing the schools, the plan first established a new classification system which ensured that all current schools, as well as any future ones, fulfill a given mission within the overall education plan. Thinking far beyond the Colegio Militar and Escuela Superior de Guerra, the classification system clearly sought to provide each service member with a comprehensive military education throughout all phases of his career. Accordingly, all schools would now fall into one of five categories: preparation, formation, application, specialization, and superior studies.

Amaro’s plan classified those schools that dealt with the most basic level of education as schools of preparation. Technically, these schools did not have to be military schools at all, and thus the schools of preparation comprised any school, military or civilian, that service members attended prior to entering the military. After receiving a basic education, those civilians or enlisted soldiers who desired to become officers in either the army or navy then attended a school of formation, which essentially meant enrolling in the Colegio Militar. From the Colegio Militar, the newly commissioned officers then attended at some point in their careers schools of application, where, based on their branch of service and occupation, they deepened their knowledge of the military and received practical training related to their particular specialty. Not all officers necessarily had to attend Amaro’s schools of specialization. In fact, at the time, there was actually just one, the *Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones* (School of

⁷Plan General de Reorganización de la Educación Militar en la República, March 14, 1932, ACT-AJA, *ibid*.

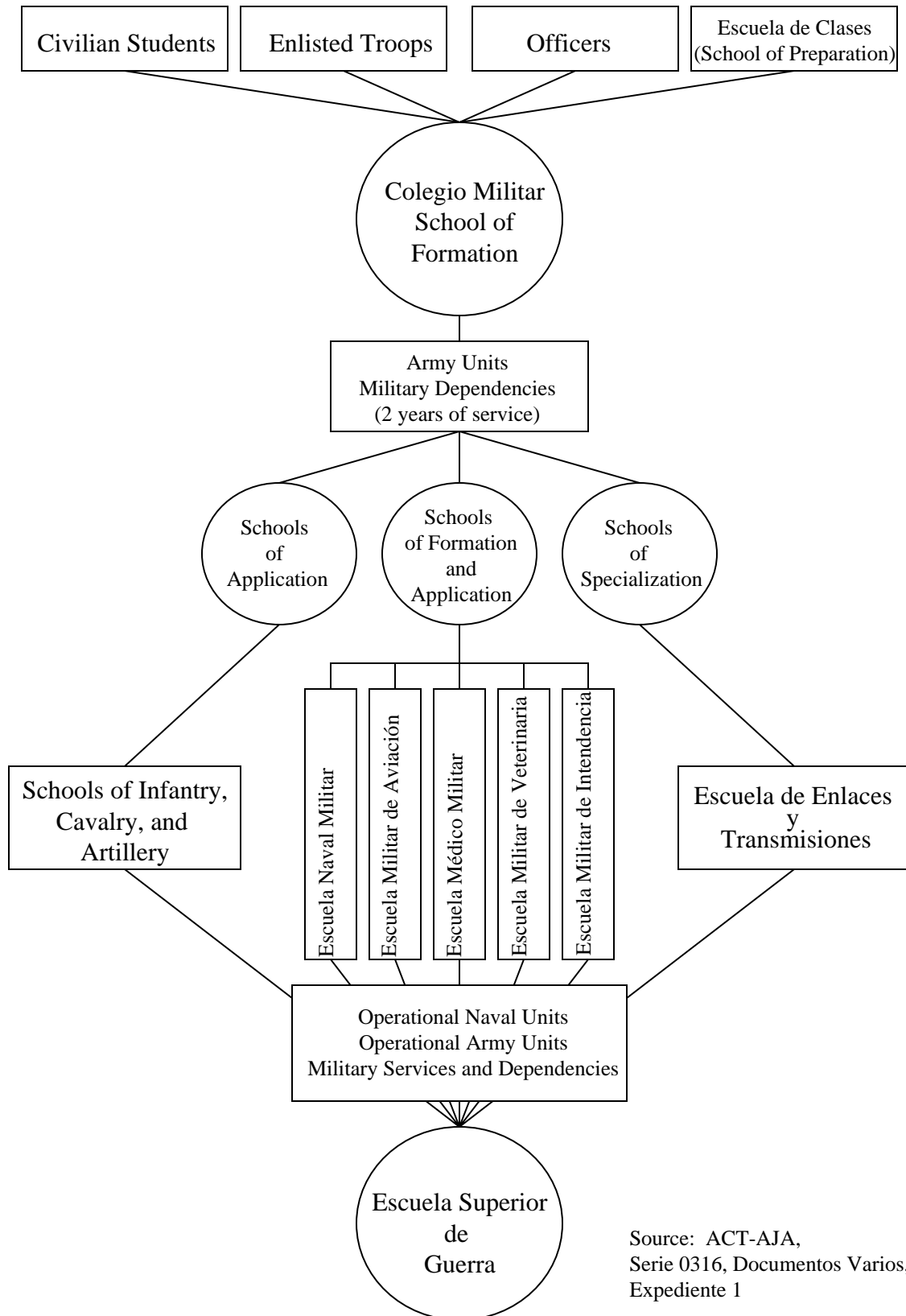
Communications).⁸ However, as the name implied, schools of specialization provided a certain number of officers from each branch of the service with specialized training. Finally, a select group of officers attended Amaro's most prized school, the Escuela Superior de Guerra, the only military school in Mexico at the time to qualify as a school of superior studies (see Figure 1).

After describing the new classification system, Amaro's reorganization plan then proceeded to reclassify each of the schools into their newly defined categories.⁹ Thus, the plan designated the *Escuela de Clases* (School of Noncommissioned Officers) as the military's lone school of preparation, since it enabled corporals and sergeants within the infantry, cavalry, or artillery branch of the army to meet the academic, physical, and military qualifications necessary to enter the Colegio Militar. Physically, the Escuela de Clases resided in the Colegio Militar, with the course itself lasting one year. Those graduates of the Escuela de Clases who wished to become officers then entered the Colegio Militar, which served as the army's primary school of formation. Students from civilian schools comprised a portion of the Colegio Militar's entering class as well, as did those officers in the rank of lieutenant through lieutenant colonel who lacked any previous professional training. In requiring those officers without formal training to attend the Colegio Militar, Amaro ensured that even some of the more experienced officers benefited from his unique professionalization and military education program.

After four years of study, the cadets who had entered as either civilians or

⁸While the literal translation for the Spanish word *enlaces* is liaisons, the common term used by the US Army and other European armies for this specialty is "signals and communications." However, it remains unclear from the existing documents if the Mexican army's Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones is more accurately translated as "School of Liaisons and Communications," or the more common "School of Signals and Communications." For purposes of this study, the translation will be simplified to "School of Communications."

⁹Ibid.

Figure 1. Military Education Process in Mexico

Source: ACT-AJA,
Serie 0316, Documentos Varios,
Expediente 1

noncommissioned officers graduated from the Colegio Militar with the rank of second lieutenant, and served in either the infantry, cavalry, or artillery branch of the army. As expected, those who entered as officers graduated with the same rank as when they entered. The Colegio Militar also held a special course for army officers serving as engineers, in which, after successfully completing the four-year program, they graduated as either civil or industrial engineers.

Having gained permission the previous December to consolidate within the Department of Military Education those military schools that belonged to other departments, Amaro now classified these institutions as both schools of formation and schools of application.¹⁰ Prior to the reorganization plan, these five schools, the *Escuela Naval Militar* (Military Naval School), the *Escuela Militar de Aviación* (Military School of Aviation), the *Escuela Médico Militar* (Military Medical School), the *Escuela Militar de Veterinaria* (Military School of Veterinary Medicine), and the *Escuela Militar de Intendencia* (Military Supply School) merely served as schools of formation. As such, these schools took a select group of officers who had already graduated from the army-oriented Colegio Militar, and trained them to become officers in their chosen field. By gaining administrative control over these schools, Amaro wisely avoided a situation in which officers serving in these other critical branches of the military—the navy, the aviation corps, the medical corps, and the supply corps—could potentially escape the critical reform and professionalization efforts affecting the army. Furthermore, by directing these schools to add additional technical courses, thus making them schools of

¹⁰Letter from Amaro to Ortiz Rubio, December 15, 1931, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 9, Correspondencia con la Escuela Superior de Guerra. See Chapter VI for a more detailed discussion concerning Amaro's consolidation of the schools.

application as well as schools of formation, Amaro sought to deepen these officers' technical knowledge and skills.¹¹ While those aspiring to become officers in one of these five other branches of the military had to pass through their respective schools of formation, Amaro did not make attendance at the schools of application mandatory. For those graduates of the Colegio Militar who remained as either infantry, cavalry, or artillery officers, Amaro established separate schools of application, offering one-year courses for them as well. As in the case of the other military branches, Amaro did not make attendance at the army schools of application obligatory. Nevertheless, any officer desiring to attend the Escuela Superior de Guerra, regardless of his branch of service, did in fact have to graduate from his respective school of application.

As mentioned above, when the reorganization plan first appeared in 1932, the Mexican military had only one school, the Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones, that qualified as a school of specialization. Unlike schools of formation, whose primary mission included officer development, or schools of application, which provided officers technical training in their particular career field or branch of service, schools of specialization afforded officers instruction in a completely different field.¹² In this particular case, the Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones took army officers in the rank of senior captain (*capitán segundo*) or major who had already graduated from the Colegio Militar, and trained them as specialists in signals and communications. Army officers who attended this two-year course still maintained their designation as either infantry, cavalry, or artillery officers, and when not serving in the signal corps, they returned to

¹¹Plan General de Reorganización de la Educación Militar en la República, March 14, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 1, Documentos Incompletos.

¹²Ibid.

their original branch of the army. Similar to the schools of specialization category, the schools of superior study comprised only one school as well, the Escuela Superior de Guerra. Amaro's plan reiterated the fact that the mission of the Escuela Superior de Guerra, open to officers from all branches of the military, was to prepare officers for command and duty on the general staff. In addition to the standard three-year course, the plan also stipulated that the Escuela Superior de Guerra would conduct a special one-year mandatory course for all generals. Clearly, Amaro intended that as many officers as possible, even his senior generals, be exposed to his education program.

In reviewing Amaro's plan for reorganizing military education, what stands out is the manner in which it mirrored, albeit on a much larger scale, his previous efforts as Secretary of War to improve officer education through the Colegio Militar and the Escuela Superior de Guerra. Like the Colegio Militar in 1925, Amaro found the military's education system in 1932 in dire need of a systematic overhaul. And just as he established the development of the cadets' moral qualities as one of the Colegio Militar's priorities, so too did Amaro speak of a military-wide education program that appreciated the difference between a somewhat superficial, though important technical instruction, and a more profound and critical moral education. Additionally, Amaro established the Escuela Superior de Guerra, in part, to act as a center for higher learning where officers could absorb a unified military doctrine. The school's graduates then insured the institutionalization of that doctrine by filling command and general staff positions. In a similar manner, Amaro used his reorganization plan to unify Mexico's disparate military school system, and thus ensure that all schools institutionalized a common set of training standards and educational goals. Armed with a plan to instill morality and

professionalization throughout the military, Amaro spent his remaining years as Director of Military Education ensuring that the military schools adhered to his reorganization plan. It is Amaro's work with these various military schools to which we now turn.

Amaro's Military Schools

Escuela de Clases

Although at times Amaro characterized the Escuela Superior de Guerra as the most prestigious of all his schools, he also saw it as only one end of a military education system anchored at the other by an equally critical institution, the Escuela de Clases. "Between these two extreme points," Amaro wrote, "swings the pendulum of the entire life of Mexico's military education."¹³ With the Escuela Superior de Guerra serving as the center for advanced military studies for officers, Amaro recognized the need to establish a similar school for noncommissioned officers:

. . . at the same time that it had been thought to create for the army a superior center of education and instruction, which establishes for generals, colonels, and officers, a true school of advanced military studies, it had been very much kept in mind the need to organize, for the lower ranks of the army, a great school . . . where the corporals and sergeants will receive a methodical and rational preparation for better managing the [lower-ranking] troops, and the unification of [their] general instructions, . . . regulations, and discipline.¹⁴

¹³"Entre estos dos puntos extremos se mueve el péndulo de toda la vida educacional militar de México . . .", "La Revolución y la Educación Militar en México," ACT-AJA, *ibid*.

¹⁴" . . . al mismo tiempo que se ha pensado en crear para el Ejército un centro superior de Educación e Instrucción, que consituye para los Generales, Jefes, y Oficiales, una verdadera Facultad de Altos Estudios Militares, se ha tenido también muy presente la necesidad de organizar, para las clases jerárquicamente inferiores del Ejército, una gran Escuela . . . en la que los Cabos y Sargentos recibirán una preparación metódica y racional para el mejor manejo de la tropa, y para la unificación de su . . . instrucción general y de la observancia de los reglamentos y de la disciplina." "La Revolución y la Educación Militar en México," ACT-AJA, *ibid*.

The Escuela de Clases began operating in January 1934, and fulfilled the requirements established nine years earlier in the Law of Promotions and Rewards, which tied noncommissioned officer promotions to attendance at the Escuela de Clases.¹⁵ Intended specifically for those in the infantry and cavalry, the school required that each infantry battalion and cavalry regiment within the army nominate one sergeant and one corporal each year to attend the one-year course.¹⁶ While many of the classes focused on technical knowledge of weapons, equipment, and combat tactics, the Escuela de Clases also provided courses in arithmetic, geometry, history, geography, military law, and military virtues, with the later consisting of four blocks: patriotism, honor, integrity, and discipline.¹⁷ It is hardly surprising that the military virtues Amaro had promoted as early as 1925 in such journals as *Revista del Ejército y de la Marina* and *El Soldado*, had eventually resurfaced nine years later as part of a formal course for the army's top noncommissioned officers. Furthermore, Amaro fully intended for the graduates of the Escuela de Clases to serve as moral examples for the more junior troops, where they would "spread among our soldiers that spirit of self-denial, of discipline and patriotism."¹⁸

¹⁵Ibid.; and "Ley de Ascenso y Recompensas del Ejército y Armada Nacionales," *Diario Oficial*, Mexico, March 15, 1926, Article 4.

¹⁶Escuela Militar para Clases: Reglamento, Instructivo para la admisión de sargentos y cabos del Ejército Nacional, para el año escolar de 1935, November 1934, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 8, Correspondencia con la Escuela Militar para Clases.

¹⁷Plan de Enseñanza de la Escuela Militar para Clases, undated, *ibid.*

¹⁸"Los Sargentos y Cabos que saldrán de esta Escuela . . . serán para la tropa los verdaderos Institutores y Maestros de mañana. Ellos difundirán, entre nuestros soldados, aquel espíritu de abnegación, de disciplina y patriotismo . . ." "La Revolución y la Educación Militar en México," ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 1, Documentos Incompletos.

Escuela Naval Militar

In justifying the creation of an Escuela de Clases, Amaro pointed out that the previous practice of training all noncommissioned officers at local, base-level schools had proved ineffective.¹⁹ By consolidating these base-level courses into one centralized school, Amaro insured that his noncommissioned officers received equal exposure to a common, uniform military doctrine that both provided advanced technical training and stressed the critical moral component of his military education program. In like fashion, Amaro envisioned the Colegio Militar, which also included a strong moral component as part of its curriculum, as the common source of training for all those desiring to become officers, regardless of service. Consequently, as Amaro planned for the first serious reorganization of the Escuela Naval Militar since 1897, he explained the reasoning behind his requirement that all officers serving in Mexico's armed forces, including those destined to serve in the navy, first graduate from the Colegio Militar's four-year program of officer formation:

The result of the natural evolution of this method, which will be followed equally in the different schools [i.e., the Escuela Naval Militar, the Escuela Militar de Aviación, the Escuela Médico Militar, the Escuela Militar de Veterinaria, and the Escuela Militar de Intendencia], will permit, with time, the binding of all the components of the army under the same principles, allowing, in addition, uniformly trained groups of men to arrive at these schools with a moral and intellectual order, as are the officers who graduate from the Colegio Militar, where, under the same discipline, the same doctrine is followed, and the soldier is guided though the same path and towards the same end.²⁰

¹⁹Letter from Amaro, January 1, 1934, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 8, Correspondencia con la Escuela Militar para Clases.

²⁰“El resultado de la evolución natural de este método, que será igualmente seguido en las distintas Escuelas, permitirá, con el tiempo, enlazar a todos los componentes del Ejército bajo los mismos principios, permitiendo, además, que a dichas Escuelas lleguen grupos de hombres homogéneos en el orden moral y en el intelectual, como son los Oficiales salidos del Colegio Militar, en donde, bajo una misma disciplina, se sigue una misma doctrina y se encauza al hombre por un mismo camino y hacia un mismo fin.” Escuela

In laying out his plan to reorganize the Escuela Naval Militar as the premier school of officer formation for the Mexican navy, Amaro stated that the school, located in the coastal city of Veracruz, would hold much of its training aboard a naval ship—the *Anahuac*—dedicated specifically for the school’s use and thus under the direction of Amaro’s Department of Military Education. To be eligible to attend the school’s three-year officer formation course, officers had to hold a rank of either second lieutenant or lieutenant, be no older than 22, and have served at least two years in the army. Whereas the old Escuela Naval Militar trained officers in such areas as naval artillery, infantry (marines) and administration, Amaro farmed these specialty courses out to other schools, changing the school’s officer formation course to comprise only two separate tracks: the general naval corps, and naval engineers. After successfully completing the three-year course, officers entered the navy with the rank of lieutenant. In addition to the officer formation course, the Escuela Naval Militar also added a one-year application course for more senior naval officers.²¹ Lastly, Amaro continued the practice of injecting morality and military virtues into the curriculum of his schools of formation by directing

Naval Militar, plan de enseñanza, su organización, finalidades, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 2, Correspondencia con la Escuela Naval. The reorganization plan for the Escuela Naval Militar proved extremely detailed, containing over 170 pages. The quote itself comes from the plan’s introduction, written by Amaro, and dated May 21, 1932.

²¹Escuela Naval Militar, plan de enseñanza, su organización, finalidades, ACT-AJA, *ibid.*; and Plan General de Reorganización de la Educación Militar en la República, March 14, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 1, Documentos Incompletos. In 1933, Amaro raised the minimum age requirement to 25.

Amaro laid out a similar plan to reorganize the Escuela Militar de Aviación, although his papers contain few details as to the exact nature of these changes. What is clear from the few surviving documents is that, similar to the Escuela Naval Militar, Amaro required that all officers entering the Escuela Militar de Aviación be graduates of the Colegio Militar, be between 22 and 28 years of age, and have at least two years of military service. After completing the two-year formation course, officers graduated from the Escuela Militar de Aviación as pilots (*pilotos aviadores*). In addition, the school also offered more senior pilots a shorter application course. See Amaro’s report entitled “Lineamientos para la formación del plan de enseñanza de la Escuela de Aviación,” September 20, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 3, Correspondencia con la Escuela Militar de Aviación.

Commodore Carlos Castillo B. Barrero, the director of the Escuela Naval Militar, to draft the school's new academic plan with the understanding that the school "must awaken and stimulate the sentiments of honor, discipline, and self-denial as a fundamental part . . . of the military spirit."²²

Escuela Médico Militar and Escuela Militar de Veterinaria

Notably, Amaro devoted considerable attention to two medical schools, the Escuela Médico Militar and the Escuela Militar de Veterinaria, that others might have viewed as less central to the military mission, or, at the very least, as offering training easily found in schools outside the military. Nevertheless, as Amaro clearly stipulated in his military education reorganization plan, the Escuela Médico Militar and the Escuela Militar de Veterinaria remained as much a part of the military education system as any of the other schools. Amaro's vision of the Escuela Médico Militar as purely military appeared in a letter he wrote to the school's deputy director in 1933:

The objective of the Escuela Médico Militar is the formation of army physicians. Now then, the army physician is not only a physician with resolute tendencies, rather [he is] something entirely special. From a technical point of view, his education must constantly keep in mind that he is going to work in a military environment. . . . From a moral point of view, the army physician must remain totally identified with the institution of which he is a member. He must possess the same ideals, the same tendencies, the particular customs, and among these, first and foremost, good judgment for command and the habit of subordination. If the military physician did not require these qualities, the corresponding school would have no reason to exist²³

²²"Debemos considerar que en todo plantel militar deben despertarse y estimularse los sentimientos de honor, disciplina y abnegación, como parte fundamental para la integración del espíritu militar" Letter from Amaro to Comodoro Carlos Castillo B. Barrero, August 31, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 2, Correspondencia con la Escuela Naval.

²³"La finalidad de la Escuela Médico Militar es la formación de médicos del Ejército; ahora bien, el médico del Ejército no es solamente un médico con determinadas orientaciones, sino algo enteramente especial; desde el punto de vista técnico, su educación debe tener constantemente a la vista que va a actuar

In the same letter, Amaro stressed that, unlike their civilian counterparts, military physicians were called to work in extreme climates that have their own unique diseases, as well as under wartime conditions which required expertise in battlefield injuries, such as those stemming from poisonous gas. In addition, Amaro argued that health problems related to poor personal hygiene, a condition especially pertinent to soldiers in the field, proved an equally important field of military medicine. Taken together, these conditions more than convinced Amaro that military medicine required expertise that his officers simply could not acquire in civilian medical schools.²⁴

Focusing first on the Escuela Médico Militar, Amaro's reorganization plan required all officers entering the school to complete a five-year formation course, after which they graduated with the title of medical assistant. Upon passing a general exam, the graduates then earned the title of medical surgeon or dental surgeon, and served in the Military Medical Corps. Since the school also functioned as a school of application, it offered to those already serving as military physicians specialized courses designed to further their knowledge in the latest medical techniques. Although the plan firmly stated that only graduates of the Colegio Militar could attend the school, Amaro soon had to change this policy and allow civilians to enter, as the military simply did not have among

dentro del medio militar . . . , desde el punto de vista moral, el médico del Ejército debe estar totalmente identificado con la Institución de la que es un elemento; debe poseer los mismos ideales, las mismas tendencias, las propias costumbres y entre éstas como primera y principal, el tino en el mando y el hábito de la subordinación. Si el médico militar no reclamara éstas condiciones la Escuela correspondiente no tendría razón de existir" Letter from Amaro to Teniente Coronel Médico Cirujano Mayoral Pardo, March 6, 1933, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 4, Correspondencia con la Escuela Médico Militar.

²⁴In Amaro's own words: "All these issues constitute a series of knowledge and practices that must serve as a motive for the military physician's study and special orientation, a study and orientation that cannot be acquired in schools dedicated to the formation of civilian physicians." Amaro's exact words in Spanish were: "Todos estos asuntos constituyen una serie de conocimientos y de prácticas que deben ser motivo de estudio y de orientación especial del médico militar, estudio y orientación que no pueden adquirirse en escuelas destinadas a la formación del médico civil" Ibid.

its ranks a sufficient numbers of officers qualified for the rigorous demands of a medical school.²⁵ Nevertheless, Amaro remained wary of breaking with his policy that all officers had to earn their commission through the Colegio Militar, and, consequently, that only graduates of the Colegio Militar remain eligible to attend the schools of formation, a policy he characterized as the “essential reform” of the 1932 military education reorganization plan.²⁶ For this reason, Amaro viewed the entrance of civilians into his military medical school as a temporary measure, fully expecting that, given more time, a sufficient number of Colegio Militar graduates would qualify for the Escuela Médico Militar.

Like the army’s medical school, Amaro viewed the Escuela Militar de Veterinaria as central to the military mission. An unsigned letter in Amaro’s files, but one that undoubtedly reflected his thoughts, stated specifically that the veterinarian remained an essential member of the military due to the important role he played in three critical areas: the treatment of diseases afflicting domestic animals; the management of domestic animals for use as a healthy and sanitary food source; and the advancement of techniques related to cattle and livestock breeding.²⁷ Elsewhere, the letter indicated that the veterinarian’s role in caring for horses, upon which the Mexican army of the 1930s so heavily relied, also made him an indispensable part of the military. Prior to Amaro’s

²⁵Letter from Amaro to the Secretary of War, October 1, 1933, ACT-AJA, *ibid.*

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷Significación de las carreras del médico veterinario y del mariscalía, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 11, Correspondencia con la Escuela de Veterinaria y Mariscalía. In another letter dated May 12, 1932 from the same file, the school’s director, Samuel H. San Martín, explained that the school first opened on March 1, 1930, when it was known as the Escuela Médico Militar de Veterinaria y Mariscalía. At some point, the name changed so that by 1932, it was simply known as the Escuela Militar de Veterinaria. However, by 1934, the documents show the school had undergone still another name change, the Escuela de Veterinaria y Mariscalía.

reorganization plan, the school held two courses, a four-year course in veterinarian medicine open to officers or civilians with the equivalent of a high school diploma, and a two-year course in *mariscalía* (a specialized branch of veterinarian medicine devoted to the care of horses) open to civilians and members of the enlisted corps.²⁸ As part of the school's reorganization in 1932, Amaro kept the two formation courses, but excluded civilians from attending. He also required that those enrolling in the *mariscalía* course be officers, and added an application course to the school's curriculum.²⁹ Those who graduated from either course relinquished membership in their previous branch of service, and entered the Military Medical Corps. Predictably, Amaro required that only graduates of the Colegio Militar be eligible for the course in veterinarian medicine. Curiously, however, Amaro waived that requirement for the *mariscalía* course, perhaps due to the great value he placed on those with specialized knowledge of horses.

Escuela Militar de Intendencia

While the Escuela Naval Militar, the Escuela Militar de Aviación, the Escuela Médico Militar, and the Escuela Militar de Veterinaria were all preexisting schools that Amaro reorganized once he took over as Director of Military Education, the Escuela Militar de Intendencia was the one major school of formation and application that Amaro actually created. Furthermore, while Amaro had clearly stressed the prominent role that military virtues would play in the curriculum of these preexisting schools, Amaro made by far the most direct link between the need for honest, disciplined officers and the creation of a school that provided these values when discussing the rationale behind the

²⁸Reglamento para la Escuela Médico Militar de Veterinaria y Mariscalía, 1930, ACT-AJA, *ibid.*

²⁹Plan General de Reorganización de la Educación Militar en la República, March 14, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 1, Documentos Incompletos.

creation of the Escuela Militar de Intendencia. In a letter to the school's new director, Amaro underscored the important role the school should play in training honest, efficient supply officers:

. . . considering the handling of goods and national wealth and other activities in which supply officers have to participate, it becomes indispensable that they also possess a moral education that guarantees said interests. [These interests must be] based on a combination of principles that supports the conduct of these men, when, in the name of the government, they must requisition and administer those goods and properties, or supervise acts that effect the public economy, procuring through its intelligent and just administrative management in order to provide for the necessities of an Army on campaign. [This procurement must be intelligent and just so] that the nation or the regions where the army might operate do not consider them as an intolerable burden because of its supplies and demands, but rather as a consumer who repays the fair value of all the elements of life that make possible [the army's] maintenance, guaranteeing in this way, the results of its mission and the prestige and good name of the government and the [military] institution.³⁰

Similar to the other schools, the Escuela Militar de Intendencia provided courses in both supply officer formation and technical application. The formation course, which accepted officers between the ranks of second lieutenant and junior captain (*capitán primero*), lasted two years, with the school's graduates transferring into the Supply Corps. At a later point in their careers, supply officers between the ranks of junior captain and colonel became eligible for the more in-depth application course, also two

³⁰“ . . . en vista del manejo de bienes y caudales nacionales y demás actividades en que tienen que intervenir los Intendentes, se hace indispensable que también posean un educación moral que garantice dichos intereses, basada en un conjunto de principios que respalden la conducta de estos hombres, cuando en nombre del Estado deban requisicionar y administrar esos bienes y propiedades, o fiscalizar actos que afecten a la economía pública, para subvenir a las necesidades de un Ejército en campaña, procurando por su gestión administrativa, inteligente y justiciera, que la Nación o las regiones donde el Ejército hubiere de operar, no lo consideren como una carga intolerable por sus despendas y exigencias, sino como un consumidor que retribuye en su justo valor todos los elementos de vida que se le faciliten para su mantenimiento, garantizando así, el resultado de su misión y el prestigio y buen nombre del Gobierno y de la Institución.” Lineamientos para la formación del Plan de Enseñanza de la Escuela Militar de Intendencia, November 25, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 6, Correspondencia con la Escuela Militar de Intendencia.

years in duration.³¹ In advising the new director of the Escuela Militar de Intendencia as he worked out the details of the courses, Amaro took great pains to emphasize that while every branch of the military had to remain loyal, the officers in the Supply Corps, even more than those in the other branches, had to remain subordinate at all times to higher command directives. “This point [concerning loyalty and subordination] is of much importance,” added Amaro, and thus he encouraged his new director, who, “upon studying it and taking it into the classrooms,” to take into consideration the need for the officers of the Supply Corps to remain trustworthy in handling the nation’s resources.³²

Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones

As the second major school that Amaro established during his tenure as Director of Military Education, the Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones differed from the others in that it served as a school of specialization.³³ Thus, army officers who attended this

³¹Reglamento para el concurso de admisión a la Escuela Militar de Intendencia, November 30, 1932, ACT-AJA, *ibid.*; and Plan General de Reorganización de la Educación Militar en la República, March 14, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 1, Documentos Incompletos.

³²The full context of Amaro’s words are as follows: “As you will understand, this point is of much importance, and upon studying it and taking it to the classrooms of your worthy school, you must take into consideration Mexico’s environment and its relations, its causes, and its effects, so that in an intelligent manner, you can arrive at an understanding of the nation, so that the school establishes itself as one of the most active collaborators of the public administration, trying to manage with greater efficiency and a greater collection of technical knowledge, the untouchable national goods that are placed in the hands of the army for its progress and maintenance.”

Amaro’s exact words in Spanish are: “Como comprenderá usted, este punto es de mucha trascendencia, y al estudiarlo y llevarlo a las aulas de esa Escuela de su merecido cargo, deberá tomar en consideración el medio ambiente mexicano y sus relaciones, sus causas y sus efectos, para que en forma inteligente pueda hacerse llegar al convencimiento de la Nación, que ese Plantel se instituye como uno de los más activos colaboradores de la administración pública, tratando de manejar con la mayor eficacia y el mayor conjunto de conocimientos técnicos, los intocables bienes nacionales que se ponen en manos del Ejército, para su progreso y mantenimiento.” Lineamientos para la formación del Plan de Enseñanza de la Escuela Militar de Intendencia, November 25, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 6, Correspondencia con la Escuela Militar de Intendencia.

³³Although unique in this regard, Amaro did require, similar to the schools of formation and application, that all applicants to the Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones be graduates of the Colegio Militar.

school gained an additional specialty in signals and communications, but remained affiliated with their original branch of the military when not serving in the signal corps. In articulating the need for a school to train communication specialists, Amaro clearly drew on his own experience during the Revolution and his study of military history overall. According to Amaro, he based his decision to establish the school on his early experiences as a commander during the Revolution, when often only a primitive system of riders on horseback kept him in tenuous communication with his forces.³⁴ In addition, Amaro cited reasons based on the experience of foreign militaries, such as Japan's victory over Russia at the battle of Mukden in 1905, in which the Japanese commander used a telephone network to maintain effective command and control over his forces. In examining Europe's experiences, Amaro noted the difficulties European armies encountered in World War I with using personnel from their engineering corps to perform the duties of a signal corps, as well as the French Army's decision in 1929 to establish their own signal corps. All these served as reasons for establishing a school to prepare signals and communications specialists.³⁵

In highlighting the importance of the Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones to the school's first director, Amaro depicted the school as a microcosm of his larger work with professionalizing the army in general.³⁶ To the great extent that victory in battle depended on the cooperation of all the diverse branches of the military working together towards a common cause and through a unified doctrine, wrote Amaro, the signals and

³⁴Iniciativa para la creación de la Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones, July 1, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 0401, Correspondencia con el Colegio Militar y las Escuelas, Expediente 5, Correspondencia con la Escuela Militar de Enlaces y Transmisiones.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Lineamientos Relativo a la Formación del Plan General de Enseñanza de la Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones, November 29, 1932, ACT-AJA, *ibid*.

communications officer served as the lynchpin or “nervous system” for communicating the orders of the high command to the units on the battlefield. Given the history of rebellion and disloyalty, however, Amaro viewed the importance of the signals and communications officer as more than simply a matter of technical competence, but also one of loyalty and discipline in communicating the orders of his superiors. Thus, Amaro counseled the school’s director to consider this aspect as a key element of the school’s mission as well:

Dealing with, in essence, the formation of officers, who, through their distinguished astuteness, audacity, and activity, will be capable of perfectly carrying out the missions they receive . . . it is indispensable that they possess a satisfactory knowledge of the conditions for employing the military and of the functioning of the general staffs themselves, as well as an ample sense of responsibility, initiative, and great speed in conception and execution, coordinating the needs of the command with the subsequent procedures, in such a way, that the means of communication never fail, and [that the officers] remain ready to respond at any moment to the enormous mission with which they are entrusted.³⁷

Amaro’s Other Projects

While Amaro devoted the majority of his time as Director of Military Education to reorganizing the Mexican military’s entire educational system, he nevertheless remained committed to utilizing military publications, an educational tool he had long recognized as important to shaping the character of his soldiers. As previously discussed, Amaro understood the importance of print media as early as 1924, when, as a commander during the de la Huerta rebellion, he employed the services of Ignacio A. Richkarday to

³⁷“Tratándose, en esencia, de formar Oficiales que por su sagacidad, audacia y actividad muy distinguidas, sean capaces de desempeñar perfectamente las misiones que reciban . . . es indispensable que posean un conocimiento satisfactorio de las condiciones de empleo de las Armas y del funcionamiento de los Estados Mayores mismos, así como un amplio sentido de responsabilidad, iniciativa, y una gran rapidez de concepción y ejecución, coordinando las necesidades del Mando con los procedimientos consecuentes, de tal manera, que los medios de transmisión nunca falten, y estén sus servidores en aptitud de responder en cualquier momento, a la enorme misión que se les confía.” Ibid.

edit various publications for his troops. Then, as Secretary of War, Amaro once again called on Richkarday, as well as others, to publish numerous military journals and magazines to help educate all service members, both in terms of technical information and military culture. Eventually, during his last year as Secretary of War in 1931, Amaro gained control over each of the military's numerous periodicals by decreeing his own press office within the Department of the Secretary of War as solely responsible for producing military publications.³⁸ Since that time, Amaro's fascination with journals, magazines, and other printed material had only grown, as even a cursory look at his files during his years as Director of Military Education clearly shows. Among the many official documents devoted to reorganizing the military education system and establishing various military schools, one also finds files brimming with articles from foreign military journals, magazines, and encyclopedias covering an entire range of subjects from military topics to sports.³⁹ In order to read these articles, Amaro had them translated into Spanish, and in fact had established his own *Oficina de Traductores de la Dirección General de*

³⁸See Chapter V for a complete review of Amaro's use of military journals and magazines as part of his overall military professionalization process.

³⁹ACT-AJA, Serie 0402, Artículos, ensayos, iniciativas y Reglamentos del Ejército. The articles devoted to military matters included the following topics: military hygiene, air defense, cooperation between air and land forces, employment of air power during war, strategic bombing, the historical and current military strategies of different nations, horse cavalry and mechanized cavalry, the organization and structure of foreign militaries, conducting a defensive war in mountainous terrain, employment of artillery in mountainous terrain, military operations at night, strategic and tactical use of infantry, cavalry tactics, and military logistics. Of course, not all of the articles and reports in Amaro's files proved of equal utility. One author, writing in the early to mid 1930s, expressed concern that many military theorists of the post-World War I era have grown enamored with the recent technological advances in military equipment, and have thus prematurely pronounced the end of the horse cavalry. Another report, dated February 6, 1932, marveled at France's vast wall of fortifications on the French-German border known as the Maginot Line. According to the report, "The Great Wall of England (a reference to Hadrian's Wall), which dates from the time of the Romans, the famous Great Wall of China, and the Hindenburg line during the Great War . . . have been walls of straw compared with the barrier France has proposed to establish for shielding its inhabitants against enemy invasions." The exact words in Spanish were: "La Gran Muralla de Inglaterra, que data del tiempo de los romanos, la famosa Gran Muralla China y la línea de Hindenburg, durante la Guerra Mundial . . . han sido murallas de paja, comparadas con la barrera que Francia se ha propuesto establecer para escudar a sus habitantes contra invasiones enemigas."

Educación Militar (Office of Translators of the Department of Military Education) for precisely that purpose.⁴⁰ Not all articles needed translation, however, as Amaro collected numerous articles from South American military journals as well, with those from Peru's *Revista Militar del Peru* (Military Magazine of Peru) proving especially popular.

Given Amaro's long fascination with publications, it is not surprising to find that, as Director of Military Education, he won approval once again to acquire responsibility for all military publishing. After having successfully argued as Secretary of War that his office should control all military publications, Amaro gained control over the *Sección de Prensa* (Press Section) and its associated budget, personnel, and resources from the very office he had just left, that of the Secretary of War, and had it report directly to his own Department of Military Education.⁴¹ In reiterating the important role that military publications played in his long-standing education and moralization campaign, Amaro stated:

The military press is the organism by which the government influences the army, directing it along the path of honor, and providing it [with the] lessons that will make it more and more worthy of its glorious destiny. Through [the military press], the morale of the soldier is raised and he is trained in the preparation, conduct, and execution of war⁴²

⁴⁰While no existing document discusses the creation of this office, the majority of the articles translated into Spanish in Amaro's files carry the byline "Oficina de Traductores de la Dirección General de Educación Militar." Thus, it can be surmised that, as the first Director of Military Education, Amaro created this office.

⁴¹Bases sobre las cuales la Dirección General de Educación Militar toma su Dependencia la Prensa del Ramo, November 30, 1932, ACT-AJA, Serie 04, Director General de Educación Militar, 1931-1935, Notas Personales. Amaro submitted his proposal to have the Sección de Prensa transferred to his office on August 12, 1932, and General Abelardo Rodríguez, as Secretary of War, approved its transfer effective August 16, 1932.

⁴²"La prensa militar es el organismo por medio del cual el Gobierno influye sobre el Ejército, dirigiéndolo por el camino del honor y proporcionándole enseñanzas que lo harán más y más digno de sus gloriosos destinos. Por ella se eleva la moral del hombre y se adiestra a éste en la preparación, conducción y ejecución de la guerra" Ibid.

With Amaro now running the military press office, he ordered personnel from the Escuela Superior de Guerra to direct and edit the army's most prominent journal, *La Revista del Ejército y de la Marina*, while the publication of such troop-oriented magazines as *El Soldado*, *Revista de Tiro*, and *Revista de Equitación*, now involved personnel from the Escuela de Clases.⁴³

One other project, grand in size but relatively unknown, also occupied a significant portion of Amaro's attention. On May 2, 1935, during his final year as Director of Military Education, Amaro met with President Lázaro Cárdenas to discuss the construction of a massive military base known as the *Ciudad Militar* (Military City).⁴⁴ Cárdenas neither approved nor rejected Amaro's proposal, but instead asked the general to return with a more detailed plan. Amaro's 98-page proposal some two months later undoubtedly impressed Cárdenas in its attention to detail and meticulous planning, but it certainly left the President unconvinced that such a massive project remained necessary. What exactly was the *Ciudad Militar*? What was its purpose? And how did Amaro justify the need for a project that seemingly had little to do with his position as Director of Military Education?

Amaro described the *Ciudad Militar* as a model military base, completely self-sufficient and representative of nearly every branch of the armed forces, which allowed the military to isolate itself from purely civilian concerns, but still benefit the nearby civilian population of Mexico City as a standard of exemplary citizenship. Certainly, such a description must have appeared extremely vague to Cárdenas and other

⁴³Ibid. As discussed in Chapter V, the English translations of the magazines named above are, respectively, Magazine of the Army and the Navy, The Soldier, Gun Magazine, and Equestrian Magazine.

⁴⁴*Ciudad Militar*, July 4, 1935, ACT-AJA, Serie 0402, Artículos, ensayos, iniciativas y Reglamentos del Ejército, Expediente 2.

government and military officials, yet Amaro never provided a more concrete explanation as to exactly how this large-scale project would benefit both the Mexican military and the nation as a whole. However, if Amaro's overall purpose for the Ciudad Militar remained scarce on specifics, his ideas as to the base's organization and composition certainly proved otherwise. Amaro had the Ciudad Militar project in mind from at least September 1932 forward, when he received a report specifying the remaining land the government would need to purchase—nine lots in all—to bring such a project to fruition.⁴⁵ In 1932, the report estimated the size of the Ciudad Militar at approximately 6.09 square miles, of which the government owned a mere fraction. The vast majority of the land, some 96 % of the total estimate, the government would have to purchase at a cost of more than 2.5 million pesos.⁴⁶ By the time Amaro submitted his report to Cárdenas in 1935, the estimated size of the base had grown to some 6.44 square miles, an extremely large area given its planned location near the capital.⁴⁷ Within this immense base, Amaro planned to construct barracks, runways, firing ranges, fields for conducting military exercises, hospitals, schools, athletic fields, and recreational facilities. To determine the proper composition of military forces, Amaro turned to his officers at the Escuela Superior de Guerra, who in turn concluded that the base could house an entire division, which they

⁴⁵Letter from Daniel González Guitrón to Amaro, June 7, 1935, ACT-AJA, Serie 0402, Artículos, ensayos, iniciativas y Reglamentos del Ejército, Expediente 1. González, an engineer, based his figures on a much earlier study dated September 29, 1932.

⁴⁶Specifically, González's report calculated the total lot size at 15,777,020 square meters with a purchase price of \$2,639,633 pesos.

⁴⁷Ciudad Militar, July 4, 1935, ACT-AJA, Serie 0402, Artículos, ensayos, iniciativas y Reglamentos del Ejército, Expediente 2. The report specified the exact size of the base at 1,668.7016 hectares, or nearly double the size of Mexico City's well-known Chapultepec Park.

defined in great detail ranging from the correct number of generals needed down to the exact number of mules required.⁴⁸

Despite the in-depth planning that Amaro put into the Ciudad Militar, his justification for the base proved ill-defined and unconvincing.⁴⁹ Legally, Amaro made the case for the Ciudad Militar based on Article 129 of the Mexican Constitution, which stated, in part, that permanent military commands and the associated facilities for housing soldiers must be located away from population centers. Amaro placed special emphasis on the phrase “away from population centers,” thus implying that any forces actually stationed within the city limits were unconstitutional. Secondly, Amaro argued that the military should isolate itself from any involvement with political parties and election propaganda, although he failed to explain how simply relocating the military outside the city limits would accomplish this goal. Amaro also added, rather unpersuasively, that by moving all military facilities away from Mexico City and consolidating them in one location, he would prevent the civilian population within the city from becoming a military target during times of war.⁵⁰ Thirdly, Amaro believed that the Ciudad Militar would provide his soldiers with the benefits of a shared social environment steeped in military values and uniform in its teachings. Next, Amaro claimed that the soldiers of the Ciudad Militar would have a tremendous influence over the civilian population of

⁴⁸Ibid. The Escuela Superior de Guerra defined a division as comprising one infantry brigade, two cavalry brigades, one artillery regiment, one echelon of combat engineers, one aviation regiment, and one civil engineering unit. Excluding additional support staff, the report calculated the total size of the various military forces at 7 generals, 91 colonels, 814 additional officers, 8,930 troops, 10 autos, 10 trucks, 32 aircraft, 4,560 horses, and 1,635 mules.

⁴⁹Amaro categorized the five points that follow as comprising the legal, political, social, educational, and economic reasons for building the Ciudad Militar. See *ibid.*

⁵⁰However effective the Ciudad Militar would have been in sparing Mexico City from becoming a military target, certainly the concept of concentrating a key portion of the military’s strategic forces in one location, thus making Mexico’s armed forces extremely vulnerable to a concentrated enemy attack, hardly made sense from a strategic point of view.

Mexico City, teaching by their exemplary behavior the importance of discipline, service to country, and democratic principles. Finally, Amaro maintained that, despite the great costs associated with purchasing land and constructing facilities, the Ciudad Militar made sense economically, since the city would obtain a fair price for its land, the existing facilities would be completely modernized, and, at the individual level, the soldiers, now living away from the city, would have little reason to spend their money on superfluous expenses.

Needless to say, Cárdenas did not approve Amaro's proposal to build the Ciudad Militar. Furthermore, no other documents in Amaro's files, either from Amaro or any other government official, make mention of Amaro's final project as Director of Military Education, indicating that the venture neither garnered much interest nor gained much credibility. While Amaro's reaction to the failure of his Ciudad Militar project to win support remains unrecorded, clearly Amaro had experienced very few setbacks in his professional career up to this point. From victorious military engagements to an ambitious structural and professional overhaul of the military, he had succeeded in nearly every assignment he tackled. Yet Amaro's failure to convince Cárdenas to authorize the construction of this one last great project indicated an underlying and growing friction between Amaro and Cárdenas in other areas as well, for the year 1935 witnessed not only the termination of the proposed Ciudad Militar project but also Amaro's tenure as Director of Military Education. In the end, it was Cárdenas who put a halt to both the Ciudad Militar project and Amaro's military career.

Amaro's Clash with Cárdenas

Despite Cárdenas' landslide electoral victory in 1934, he entered the office of the presidency that December at a time of severe social unrest.⁵¹ While Catholic officials spoke out forcefully against discriminatory laws stripping the church of its property and right to worship, private-school officials and university students agitated for full autonomy from government-directed curricula.⁵² Nevertheless, the majority of the social unrest during the new president's first year in office stemmed from the great rise in labor strikes, encouraged in part by Cárdenas himself, who persuaded urban labor to assert their constitutional right to strike. While the year 1934 witnessed 202 strikes involving 14,685 workers, the rate in 1935 soared to a staggering 642 strikes and 145,212 workers.⁵³ To make matters worse, the federal Congress divided sharply between those who supported Cárdenas and those who backed Calles. With various gubernatorial elections on the horizon, and thus the brewing of a battle between *cardenistas* and *callistas* for control of the party, Cárdenas undoubtedly felt politically vulnerable, especially from those linked to Calles, Mexico's still-powerful *Jefe Máximo*.

Perhaps only in light of this precarious political backdrop can one make sense of what the American military attaché in Mexico at the time called the "Amaro Incident." On the surface, the Amaro Incident began innocently enough. Barely a month into his

⁵¹According to one announcement, Cárdenas won the 1934 presidential election with 98% of the popular vote out of some 2.3 million votes cast. His closest competitor finished with a mere 24,690 votes. See Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 589. Just as *callistas* were followers of Calles, *cardenistas* were followers of Cárdenas.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 625-629.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 631.

term, Cárdenas intervened on behalf of three students at the Escuela Superior de Guerra who had complained to him that the school's director, Luis Alamillo Flores, had deemed them unqualified to graduate.⁵⁴ In what may have been a misguided attempt to impress the army with a desire to give each of its members personal attention, Cárdenas imprudently appointed three generals to investigate the matter, perhaps not realizing how Amaro would react to such a move.⁵⁵ Possibly sensing a challenge to his authority, Amaro immediately stepped in to back Alamillo Flores, the director of his most prestigious school and a trusted friend, and then threatened to resign as Director of Military Education should Cárdenas force Alamillo Flores to graduate the officers. Cárdenas responded several weeks later by appointing a board of 20 officers to subject each member of the graduating class to an oral examination; those who passed the exam would then be allowed to graduate.⁵⁶ In the meantime, a report by the army's inspector general accused Alamillo Flores and two of the school's instructors as behaving in a manner that was "partial," "violent," and "despotic," and recommended their dismissal.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Lieutenant Colonel H.E. Marshburn, Military Attaché, NAW, RG 165, MID, G-2 Report No. 5794, January 4, 1935.

⁵⁵Marshburn theorized that Cárdenas may have been trying to impress the army based on what others were saying at the time. Ibid.

⁵⁶Marshburn, *ibid.*, G-2 Report No. 5860, January 29, 1935. Marshburn stated that the 20 officers comprising the board were "not by any means among the best educated officers of the Mexican Army," pointing out that the general doing most of the questioning had a background as a street car conductor. Having seen several of the exam questions personally, Marshburn characterize them as "silly." He also reported that when one of the officers refused to submit to the examination, Amaro personally ordered him to do so. Curiously, the only officers who failed to report before the board were the three who initially lodged the complaint against Alamillo Flores. Eventually, the board found all officers fit for duty, and recommended to Cárdenas that they all be allowed to graduate. See Marshburn, *ibid.*, G-2 Report No. 5960, February 26, 1935.

⁵⁷Report from General Heriberto Jara, Inspector General, to Amaro, January 10, 1935, ACT-AJA, Serie 04, Director General de Educación Militar, 1931-1935, Notas Personales.

Amaro promptly fired back a detailed ten-page report refuting each of the charges.⁵⁸

Why had Cárdenas so early in his administration challenged Amaro, arguably the most powerful general still on active duty, especially on a matter that many officers increasingly viewed as “stupid,” “thoughtless,” and “a joke?”⁵⁹ The historical record is not clear; however, given the divisive nature of Mexico’s politics, Cárdenas undoubtedly viewed Amaro as a callista, and may have sought to use this incident to undercut Amaro’s standing within the army, and, by extension, weaken Calles’ base of support. Unfortunately for Cárdenas, the Amaro Incident had exactly the opposite effect, for as knowledge of the incident spread among the officers, it was Cárdenas’ prestige within the army that fell.⁶⁰

As the Amaro Incident dragged into March, Cárdenas, not content to let the matter subside, decided against a direct confrontation with Amaro, and instead issued an order relieving Alamillo Flores as director of the Escuela Superior de Guerra. Additional accusations against Alamillo Flores and the Escuela Superior de Guerra concerning charges of treason and wasteful spending now surfaced, further inflaming tensions on both sides.⁶¹ Fed up with the entire affair, Amaro refused to comply with the order to fire Alamillo Flores, and instead paid a personal visit to Cárdenas to settle the issue.

Speaking in an unusually frank manner, Amaro told Cárdenas that the whole affair had

⁵⁸Letter from Amaro to the Secretary of War, January 25, 1935, ACT-AJA, *ibid.*

⁵⁹Marshburn, *ibid.*, G-2 Report No. 5794, January 4, 1935, and G-2 Report No. 5960, February 26, 1935.

⁶⁰Marshburn, *ibid.*, G-2 Report No. 5860, January 29, 1935.

⁶¹Marshburn, *ibid.*, G-2 Report No. 5982, March 7, 1935, and G-2 Report No. 6002, March 15, 1935. Not surprisingly, the three officers who originally complained to Cárdenas were also the ones who leveled these new accusations against Alamillo Flores and the Escuela Superior de Guerra. Marshburn reported that many officers assigned to the office of the Secretary of War dismissed these new charges as “another act of the three officers who failed to graduate from the Superior School of War.”

turned ridiculous and that it should end immediately, adding that if Cárdenas insisted on removing Alamillo Flores, then he too wanted to be relieved, as he would “not stand for any further treatment of this kind.”⁶² At this point, Cárdenas decided to end any further escalation of the incident and replied, “I don’t blame you at all, and only the officers approved by you will graduate. Keep Alamillo as long as you want him.”⁶³

For the moment, Cárdenas’ attempt to challenge Amaro’s authority and garner his own support within the military had ended in a complete victory for Amaro. Yet Amaro would not enjoy this victory for long, as the growing rivalry between Calles and Cárdenas eventually involved Amaro as well. This time, however, the conflict between the President and the powerful Jefe Máximo involved matters much weightier than those related to the Escuela Superior de Guerra, and, unlike the Amaro Incident, it was a conflict from which Cárdenas could not back down. Cárdenas, like most government officials in Mexico, recognized that from 1928 – 1934, the period encompassing the presidencies of Emilio Portes Gil, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, and Abelardo L. Rodríguez, it was Calles who essentially held the reigns of political power. In fact, Cárdenas could not have missed that it was Ortiz Rubio’s inability to extract himself from Calles’ political grip that led directly to his resignation as president in 1932.⁶⁴ At some point, Cárdenas

⁶²Marshburn, *ibid.*, G-2 Report No. 6018, March 19, 1935. Marshburn’s knowledge of the conversation between Cárdenas and Amaro was based on a Mexican officer who claimed to be present at the meeting. At another point during the meeting, Amaro referred to Cárdenas’ special examining board as “your bunch of meddling Federalists.”

⁶³*Ibid.* When speaking to Amaro, Cárdenas reportedly adopted the much more informal “*tú*” form of Spanish, as opposed to the formal “*usted*” more commonly expected in such a situation.

⁶⁴For a detailed account of the Calles-Ortiz Rubio conflict, see Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 514-538.

realized that to assert his political independence, he would have to defeat Calles, and anyone aligned with him.

For the first six months of Cárdenas' presidency, Calles remained relatively inactive, having traveled to Los Angeles, California for medical treatment and then to his ranch for a period of recuperation. By June 1935, however, Calles dropped all pretense of politeness and published a stinging rebuke of Cárdenas' first six months in office, indirectly accusing the President of encouraging political divisions within the party and of endangering the nation's economy and social stability through his failure to control the labor strikes.⁶⁵ Cárdenas responding by dismissing his entire cabinet, mostly staffed by committed callistas, and replacing them with his own supporters. Calles suddenly retreated from his aggressive stance, stating that his declaration had been misinterpreted, and concluded, "There is no remedy for this, unfortunately, and I have resolved to leave the Republic, retiring forever from all political activity."⁶⁶ Calles' self-imposed exile in the U.S. proved temporary, and on December 13, 1935, word soon spread that Calles would be flying into Mexico City's Balbuena Airport late that afternoon.⁶⁷ Of the many supporters who greeted Calles at the airport that day, Amaro was not among them. Amaro, it turned out, had left late for the airport, and was still en route when Calles' plane had landed. But such nuances probably mattered little to Cárdenas, who surmised

⁶⁵A complete version of Calles' declaration in Spanish can be found in Richkarday, *60 años en la vida de México*, vol. 2, 391-397, and Emilio Portes Gil, *Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana; un tratado de interpretación histórica* (México: Instituto Mexicano de Cultura, 1964), 693-695. For an English translation of Calles' declaration, see Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 637-638.

⁶⁶"Esto ya no tiene remedio, desgraciadamente; y he tomado la determinación de ausentarme de la República, retirándome para siempre de toda actividad política." Portes Gil, *Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana*, 699; and Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 643-644.

⁶⁷Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 659-660.

that those who greeted Calles had proved their disloyalty to the President. That same evening, Amaro received a telephone call. By presidential decree, Amaro had been relieved of his command as Director of Military Education.⁶⁸ For the foreseeable future, Amaro's military career was over.

⁶⁸Alamillo Flores, *Memorias*, 455-456.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION: AMARO'S LEGACY

In many ways, Amaro's fall from power in 1935 signified a new era in Mexican politics, one increasingly marked by the gradual decline of Mexico's revolutionary generals and the growing power of Mexico's dominant political party, the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR, or National Revolutionary Party).¹ As proof of the revolutionary generals' declining influence in Mexican politics, Cárdenas witnessed only one rebellion during his tenure, that of General Saturnino Cedillo in 1938. Unlike previous rebellions, however, no other generals were willing to join Cedillo and his private army, and the Mexican military, which had remained loyal, easily crushed the rebellion within a few weeks. Furthermore, when Manuel Avila Camacho, the official candidate of the ruling party for the 1940 presidential elections, defeated prominent revolutionary general Juan Andreu Almazán at the polls, little came of Almazán's threat to overthrow Avila Camacho through armed insurrection. In fact, rather than lead a revolt, Almazán fled the country, only to return a short while later to attend Avila

¹Seeking to change the structure of the PNR, created during the Calles administration in 1929, Cárdenas replaced it with the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM, or Party of the Mexican Revolution) in 1938. In 1946, the PRM underwent its own transformation, emerging as the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI, or Institutional Revolutionary Party). For the next 54 years, the PRI maintained its monolithic hold on Mexico's political process, winning every presidential election until the recent 2000 election of Vicente Fox of the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN, or National Action Party). For a detailed discussion of how Cárdenas' PRM further eroded the military's political influence, see Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 121-127.

Camacho's inauguration, and eventually, to resume duty as a general at Cárdenas' invitation.²

Transitions such as the one that has occurred in Mexico—in which the military exchanged its de facto role as arbiter of presidential successions for one that was largely supportive of and loyal to the government—are truly rare. When Díaz remarked in 1911, “Madero has unleashed a tiger, let us see if he can control him,” no one could have predicted that much of the credit for this remarkable transition—the taming of Mexico's tiger—would belong to Amaro, who, at the time, was serving as a lowly private in a peasant army. Amaro, of course, did not remain a private for very long, rising to the rank of general de división by 1920. While Amaro's rapid rise through the ranks is in and of itself a noteworthy achievement, it was his ten-year period as Mexico's Secretary of War and Director of Military Education that truly mark his most important work in professionalizing the Mexican military. Yet, the young, fierce general who rose to power as Secretary of War in 1925 was also a product of his past, a past, it turns out, in which lessons in loyalty played a critical part.

Lessons in Loyalty

At the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, and for several years afterwards, the revolutionary generals instigated, witnessed, or were themselves the victim of a steady parade of treacherous assassinations, deceitful alliances, and violent rebellions. Given such chaotic and unpredictable circumstances, it might appear unlikely that any prominent military officer would cultivate a sense of loyalty to any one person or cause, since such seemingly naive sentiments could leave one vulnerable to another's

²Ibid., 126, 136-138.

devious plans. It remains all the more striking, therefore, to realize that Amaro exhibited a great degree of loyalty to certain individuals and ideals during his early years in the military, a trait he continued to cultivate throughout his career. Perhaps Amaro's most important lesson in loyalty involved his experience with General Gertrudis G. Sánchez, as Amaro took careful note of how his commanding officer's inability to choose his allies wisely and remain committed to a cause ultimately left him politically and militarily isolated. Whereas Sánchez wavered back and forth between proclamations both for and against Carranza, Villa, and the Conventionalists, Amaro identified himself early on as a staunch supporter of Carranza and the Constitutionalist cause. For Amaro, the consequences of Sánchez's indecisiveness could not have been clearer; whereas Sánchez met a tragic death at the hands of his one-time subordinates, Amaro continued to rise in prominence, as Amaro's alliance with Obregón, Carranza's commanding general, proved to be one of the most decisive turning points of his military career.

The friendship that subsequently developed between Obregón and Amaro after their first encounter in 1915, the year Amaro joined Obregón for his critical showdown with Villa, proved vital to Amaro's subsequent rise through the ranks. By fighting courageously for Obregón during the critical battle of Celaya, Amaro not only proved his loyalty to Obregón and the Constitutionalist cause, he also showcased his talent as a skilled warrior and leader. In turn, Obregón interceded on behalf of Amaro when General Francisco Murguía sought out those responsible for the treacherous attack on his forces at Cerro de las Vueltas the previous year. Obregón's timely intercession undoubtedly saved Amaro's military career and perhaps his very life as well, as Murguía did not hesitate to execute General Pantoja, the officer ultimately identified as

responsible for the attack. Meanwhile, Amaro's loyalty to Obregón during the 1920 Agua Prieta rebellion against Carranza served Amaro well, as he garnered a promotion to the prestigious rank of general de división. As a loyal obregonista, Amaro experienced first-hand the difficulties associated with command, as the frequent number of local rebellions and desertions during his tenure as Chief of Military Operations for the 3rd and 7th Military Zones highlighted the lack of cohesion within the army, as well as the absence of any sense of loyalty or identification with the military as a legitimate institution of the state.

By 1925, Amaro had risen to the top position within the Mexican military, that of Secretary of War, and thus had to deal with the issue of loyalty at an entirely new level, as he now assumed command of all military forces. To rein in the disparate and fiercely independent revolutionary armies that had emerged from the chaos of the Mexican Revolution, Amaro would need to forge them into a unified and professional national army, one whose members professed loyalty not to individual generals but to the Mexican government. In this sense, Amaro emulated his mentor, Obregón, who understood that the professionalization of the military was critical to ending the constant cycle of rebellion and political instability plaguing Mexico. More importantly, however, both Obregón and Amaro understood that structural reforms alone would never solve the underlying problem of a corrupt and rebellious military, for only an ethical reform—a “moralization” of the military—could end the culture of militarism pervading Mexico's armed forces. In a speech to the army during his first year as Secretary of War, Amaro

made clear his priorities, telling his men, “. . . prior to [addressing] the material needs of an army, there must always be the moral question.”³

As we have seen, Amaro’s moralization campaign took several forms. In one of his first acts as Secretary of War, Amaro published four new laws in 1926 that both restructured the military and addressed the new moral standards that he expected his men to follow. Of the four laws, it was the Law of Discipline that most clearly delineated these new standards of moral behavior, as well as the disciplinary measures Amaro would take against anyone who refused to obey them. Carrying out one’s duty “to the point of sacrifice,” putting “the sovereignty of the nation, and loyalty to its institutions” before personal interest, and maintaining obedience and a “high concept of honor, justice, and morality” now served as the standards for military duty.⁴ But the Law of Discipline was only one of many measures Amaro employed to replace the culture of militarism with one based on loyalty. After reviewing the deplorable state of the Colegio Militar and identifying as its “most fatal” defect the school’s failure to “inculcate and develop in the student civic and moral virtues,” Amaro overhauled the school and added courses to the curriculum that reinforced such values as duty, honor, and loyalty.⁵ Drawing on his past experience as a commander, Amaro also made creative use of such military journals as *Revista del Ejército y de la Marina* and *El Soldado*, to name only two, to impart the very

³“ . . . antes de que la parte material de un Ejército, siempre debe estar la cuestión moral.” Undated speech, ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 3, Documentos Relativos al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina. Although the speech is not dated, the context indicates Amaro gave the speech in 1925.

⁴“Ley de Disciplina del Ejército y de la Armada Nacionales,” *Diario Oficial*, Mexico, March 15, 1926, Articles 1 and 3. See Chapter IV for a full discussion of this law. Amazingly, the Mexican military has never modified this law, and thus it remains in effect in its original form.

⁵ACT-AJA, Serie 0316, Documentos Varios, Expediente 3, Documentos Relativos al Colegio Militar, Secretaría de Guerra y Marina. See Chapter V for the full context of this quote.

same values of duty, honor, and loyalty to his officers and enlisted troops that formal schools such as the Colegio Militar communicated to their students.

Although Amaro stepped down from his position as Secretary of War in 1931, his new assignment as Director of Military Education scarcely hampered his program of military reform. In fact, Amaro's new title now placed him much closer to those institutions of military education that he had identified years earlier as the real key to successful military reform. The following year, with the help of Alamillo Flores, Amaro established the Escuela Superior de Guerra, Mexico's first school of advanced military studies, for the specific purpose of instilling within the newer generation of officers a common doctrine that both unified the military and encouraged support for the government and its institutions. The mission of civic action, which included various public works ranging from flood control projects to road and school construction, served as a key component of this new common doctrine. In essence, civic action would foster a closer relationship between the soldier and the citizen, an important step for encouraging the military to break its tradition of rebellion and disloyalty. Overall, the Escuela Superior de Guerra served as yet another crucial move towards institutionalizing Amaro's vision of a loyal army that supported, rather than threatened, the government, for the doctrine of civic action would continue to influence the school's graduates, and thus the nation's future military leaders, long after Amaro's departure.

As central as the Colegio Militar and the Escuela Superior de Guerra were to Amaro's goal of creating a cohesive, professional, and loyal military, Amaro immediately set out to broaden his educational reform program beyond these two schools. With the publication in 1932 of the General Military Education Reorganization Plan, Amaro

created a program to provide each service member, whether officer or enlisted, with a comprehensive military education throughout all phases of his career. By centralizing the various military schools and placing them under his command, Amaro insured their adherence to a common set of training standards and educational goals, including those devoted to fostering the ever-important concept of loyalty. Whether reorganizing already existing schools, such as the Escuela Naval Militar, the Escuela Militar de Aviación, the Escuela Médico Militar, and the Escuela Militar de Veterinaria, or creating entirely new schools, such as the Escuela Militar de Intendencia and the Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones, Amaro sought to impart not only the latest technical instruction to his troops, but also such moral values as loyalty, discipline, and honor. The push to establish a system of education that stressed moral values proved especially relevant to the Escuela Militar de Intendencia and the Escuela de Enlaces y Transmisiones. Indeed, Amaro's own experience had shown that it was in the Supply Corps where opportunities for corruption were most prominent, while in the Signal Corps loyalty and discipline in communicating orders had been critical to putting down rebellions. In like fashion, Amaro insured that the school for non-commissioned officers, the Escuela de Clases, incorporated as part of its curriculum a course on military virtues, which included specific lessons on patriotism, honor, integrity, and discipline. In sum, Amaro's early lessons in personal loyalty eventually became lessons in institutional loyalty that he sought to pass on to the military.

Amaro's Legacy

The celebrated author and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, “An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man,” and perhaps nowhere has that been more true than in the case of the Mexican military.⁶ Although Amaro left both his position as Director of Military Education and active-duty military service in 1935, the impact that this comparatively unknown general has had on the Mexican military continues to manifest itself even today. For example, a cursory examination of the current Mexican military demonstrates that a formal education, including officer formation, technical courses, and advanced studies, has retained its central role in shaping the military experience. Anyone wishing to become an officer must still pass through a school of formation, whether that be through the Colegio Militar, or, for example, the much newer *Colegio del Aire* (Air College), where cadets who wish to enter the Mexican Air Force now train. Although a host of new schools are now available to service members, such as those for training nurses, engineers, dentists, and troops specializing in various technical fields, the well-established Escuela Superior de Guerra has remained critical to an officer's career, with successful completion of the course serving informally as a prerequisite for promotion to general.⁷ Furthermore, since 1981, the Mexican military has added another level of higher education, the *Colegio de Defensa Nacional* (National Defense College), from

⁶The quote is contained in an essay written by Emerson in 1841 entitled “Self-Reliance.” See Stephen E. Whicher, ed., *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), 154.

⁷For a description of Mexico's more recent military schools, see Luis Gárfias Magaña, “El Ejército Mexicano Actual,” in *El Ejército Mexicano: Historia desde los Orígenes hasta nuestros Días*, Jesús de León Toral, et.al. (México: Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, 1979), 512-520. For the importance of the Escuela Superior de Guerra to an officer's career progression, see Camp, *Generals in the Palacio*, 158-159; and Wager, “The Mexican Army, 1940-1982,” 116.

which an increasing number of Mexico's highest-ranking and most influential generals have graduated.⁸

Of all the schools Amaro established, perhaps the one today that most bears his legacy is the Colegio Militar, now known as the Heroico Colegio Militar, the school Amaro temporarily shut down in 1925 due in part to its failure to graduate officers of sufficient moral character. Despite the passage of several decades, those scholars researching the Heroico Colegio Militar during the late 1980s and early 1990s have reached a clear consensus that the school serves as one of the most important institutions for inculcating future officers with the basic military values that they will carry with them throughout their careers.⁹ According to Stephen Wager, a US Army officer who interviewed several Mexican army officers for his doctoral dissertation, a Mexican general affirmed that the Heroico Colegio Militar receives cadets at an impressionable age, tells them that they represent the values of the Mexican Revolution, and convinces them that they are the loyal servants of the Mexican people.¹⁰ This observation accords well with Lyle McAlister's analysis that from the time a cadet enters the Heroico Colegio Militar until the time he graduates, he lives in an environment filled with activities carefully planned to develop the personal qualities the school wants to instill, especially loyalty.¹¹

⁸Camp, *Generals in the Palacio*, 153, 164; and Wager, "The Mexican Army, 1940-1982," 118.

⁹Camp, *Generals in the Palacio*, 144-145; Wager, "The Mexican Army, 1940-1982," 107-109; and Ackroyd, "Descendants of the Revolution," 110-113.

¹⁰Wager, "The Mexican Army, 1940-1982," 109.

¹¹Lyle N. McAlister, *The Military in Latin American Socio-political Evolution: Four Case Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Research in Social Systems, 1970), 230.

Amaro's impact on today's Heroico Colegio Militar has manifested itself in other ways as well. For instance, Amaro's goal of creating a training environment within the Colegio Militar that fostered such values as duty, honor, and loyalty clearly influenced the school's subsequent adoption of a text on military values. The text, entitled *Moral, Militar, y Civismo* (Morality, the Military, and Citizenship), has been used extensively since its original publication in 1938, and contains well over a hundred short essays addressing such values as discipline, honor, duty, patriotism, loyalty, and personal responsibility.¹² Lastly, some fifty-four years after Amaro first published the army's Law of Discipline in 1926, the Heroico Colegio Militar admissions pamphlet for 1980 replicated Article 3 of this law in order to emphasize the critical role that discipline plays in the life of the military.¹³ In essence, today's Heroico Colegio Militar appears to be very much the same Colegio Militar Amaro originally created.

While Mexico's system of military education has certainly continued Amaro's legacy, evidence exists to show that the military in general has continued to convey Amaro's original vision of a disciplined, loyal, and professional military. In an in-depth analysis of the Mexican Army's ideology of the early 1990s, Wager identified several values that clearly correspond to those Amaro initially emphasized during the 1920s. According to Wager, the guiding ideology of the modern Mexican Army consists of six distinct values: a revolutionary heritage, loyalty, discipline, patriotism, nationalism, and

¹²Alfonso Corona del Rosal, *Moral, Militar, y Civismo* (México, D.F.: Imprenta y Editorial Militar Anahuac, 1938). Corona del Rosal published a second edition of *Moral, Militar, y Civismo* in 1949, as well as a third in 1952.

¹³Ackroyd, "Descendants of the Revolution," 112. Article 3 of the Law of Discipline states: "The discipline in the Army and in the Navy is the standard to which all service members must adjust their conduct; it [discipline] has as its base obedience and a high concept of honor, justice, and morality, and as its objective, [it has] the faithful and exact fulfillment of the duties which the military laws and regulations prescribe."

apoliticism.¹⁴ The similarity between the list of values Wager compiled and those that Amaro so consciously fostered through military laws, the print media, and the military schools is truly remarkable, and testifies to the lasting impact of Amaro's moralization campaign. Other signs of Amaro's influence on the modern Mexican military continue to surface as well, such as the manner in which the army's premier journal, the *Revista del Ejército y de la Marina*, has continued promoting the same values of loyalty, discipline, and duty that they once advanced during Amaro's day. For example, an analysis of the articles contained in *Revista* between 1973 and 1976 reveals that approximately 16% conveyed a theme of loyalty to the nation and its institutions.¹⁵

Finally, the mission of civic action, so crucial to Amaro's goal of establishing a closer relationship between the soldier and the citizen as a means for ending the army's tradition of rebellion and disloyalty, has remained a central part of today's Mexican military. Of the five official army missions laid out in the most recent version of the military's Organic Law, the last three clearly fall under the general category of civic action: aiding the civilian population in cases of public necessity; carrying out civic deeds and social works that contribute to the progress of the country; and maintaining order and aiding the populace in the case of a natural disaster.¹⁶ In his study of the Mexican army, Wager lists eleven distinct civic action missions, ranging from the repair and construction of roads and schools to participation in the government's national

¹⁴Wager, "The Mexican Army, 1940-1982," 64-121.

¹⁵Ackroyd, "Descendants of the Revolution," 124. Ackroyd also states that an informal examination of the articles contained in *Revista* during the presidency of José López Portillo (1976-1982) revealed findings similar to his formal analysis. In a review of *Revista* articles between 1940 and 1982, Wager finds the loyalty to be a prominent theme as well. See Wager, "The Mexican Army, 1940-1982," 78.

¹⁶*Diario Oficial*, Mexico, December 26, 1986.

development programs in the rural areas, missions that may have consumed as much as 60% of the military's budget.¹⁷

In sum, Amaro has indeed cast a long shadow over the Mexican military, as his legacy of taming Mexico's tiger and creating a loyal military subservient to civilian rule has clearly passed down to succeeding generations. That the modern Mexican military has sustained Amaro's legacy and stands ready to pass this heritage to succeeding generations is perhaps best captured by the words of General Galván López, Mexico's Secretary of Defense in 1976:

“We, the generation that have the honor to succeed the creators of this army, want to emulate the virtues that they forged: their loyalty, their revolutionary consciousness, their disinterest, and their love of country, and we will completely fulfill our mission if upon transferring the positions of responsibility to the officers that succeed us when the hour of relief arrives, we also will transmit these same values.”¹⁸

The End of a Military Career

Cárdenas' firing of Amaro as Director of Military Education in 1935 did end Amaro's military career, but only temporarily. At one point in 1939, as powerful politicians and generals began jockeying for the nomination to succeed Cárdenas, Amaro announced his intention to run for president. Amaro's presidential campaign never gained momentum, however, and those desiring yet another revolutionary general as

¹⁷Wager, “The Mexican Army, 1940-1982,” 268-305. The civic action missions Wager discussed include the following: repair and construction of roads and schools; literacy training; reforestation and extinguishing forest fires; campaigns against livestock plagues and epidemics; participation in the antidrug campaign, disaster relief; vigilance against rural crime and security service; assistance in conducting national censuses; vigilance of the nation's highways and main roads; social action brigades (which provide basic health care, vaccinations, sanitation facilities, family planning services, and personal hygiene orientations to those residing in isolated areas); and participation in national development programs.

¹⁸Cited in Wager, “The Mexican Army, 1940-1982,” 120.

president eventually backed Almazán, not Amaro.¹⁹ While the new president, Avila Camacho, had little use for Amaro as a politician, Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 meant that the president eventually had great a need for Amaro as a general, where his military expertise could aid in strengthening the nation's coastal defenses.²⁰ After a reorganization of the military zones, Amaro donned his uniform once again and assumed command, in October 1942, of a new military region encompassing the strategically important Isthmus of Tehuantepec. As the war drew to a close and the threat to Mexico subsided, Amaro then took charge in January 1944 of the 28th Military Zone in the state of Oaxaca, a command he held until February 1950.²¹ Amaro genuinely appeared to enjoy his lengthy tenure in Oaxaca, where, as regional commander, he often employed his men in civic action missions to alleviate various problems plaguing the impoverished region.²² Then, in early January 1950, Amaro temporarily left his headquarters in Oaxaca to travel to Mexico City where his wife, Elisa, was scheduled for surgery. While the doctors treating Elisa assured Amaro that his wife would recover from her surgery, they also noticed that Amaro himself appeared ill. After running several tests, the doctors

¹⁹Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, 130-132. As previously mentioned, Almazán ultimately failed in his bid for the presidency as well. While Avila Camacho, the official candidate of the ruling party, was also a general, the majority of the military did not support him, as they did not consider him a true general of the Revolution. Avila Camacho had served in the Revolution as a major, thus his rank was not earned on the battlefield, but was considered a gift from Obregón for his loyalty during the 1923 de la Huerta rebellion.

²⁰Wager, "The Mexican Army, 1940-1982," 186.

²¹AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 4, Foja 1739; and Kiosco Cultural Banejército, *General Joaquín Amaro Domínguez (1889-1952)* (Exposición Gráfica con motivo del XXXVIII Aniversario de su Fallecimiento, 1990)

²²AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 9, Fojas 2033, 2034, 2038, 2046. Amaro's son, Manuel, confirmed that Amaro obtained a great degree of satisfaction from his work in Oaxaca. Interview with Manuel Amaro conducted on March 22, 2004.

confirmed that Mexico's famed revolutionary general had been struck by cancer.²³

Ultimately, it was this illness—cancer—that finally ended Amaro's long military career.

A General is Buried

In March of 1952, General Joaquín Amaro lay in a hospital bed, the life slowly draining from his body. While he had undergone surgery just over three months ago, the operation had done little to halt the deadly pancreatic cancer that now ravaged his body.²⁴ Having lain in bed for nearly a week as the cancer proceeded through its final stages, Amaro had experienced extreme pain throughout most of most of his stay. Now, in his final moments, he appeared very calm.²⁵ Crowded into room number seven of the first ward in Mexico City's *Hospital Frances*, the room where Amaro lay that evening, were some eighteen people—family members, intimate friends, and military and government officials—all surrounding the general's bed as his inevitable death drew near.²⁶ Still calm, Amaro looked at his son, Manuel, sitting close to his bed, and quietly died.

The news of Amaro's death spread quickly. Someone, probably one of the military officers in Amaro's hospital room, immediately notified the President, Miguel Alemán, as well as the nation's Secretary of Defense, General Gilberto R. Limón. At the request of family members, the body was taken to Amaro's house that same day, March

²³ACT-AJA Archivo Familiar, Expediente Elisa Izaguirre de Amaro. This expediente contains several telegrams dated January 3, 1950 from Amaro to friends in Oaxaca stating that his wife's operation was successful. Manuel Amaro confirmed that it was during this visit that the doctors noted Amaro's ill health. Interview with Manuel Amaro conducted on March 22, 2004.

²⁴AHSDN/JAD, Expediente XI/111/1-39, Tomo 10, Foja 2276, 2277, 2278; Ibid., Tomo 4, Foja 1730.

²⁵Interview with Manuel Amaro conducted on March 22, 2004.

²⁶*Excélsior* (Mexico City), March 16, 1952.

15, 1952, where the family would hold the wake.²⁷ General Limón led the procession that accompanied the deceased general's body, now outfitted in full military dress, as it made the journey from the hospital to Amaro's home. Throughout the entire night and into the next day, various high-ranking military officials stood guard over Amaro's coffin as hundreds of dignitaries passed through to pay their last respects.²⁸ By the time President Alemán and the numerous government and military officials who accompanied him, all wearing black armbands, arrived at about 4:00 PM, over five hundred funeral wreaths had been delivered to the house. Approximately 25 minutes later, President Alemán—accompanied by Amaro's son, Manuel, on his left, and General Limón on his right—led the funeral procession the short distance from Amaro's home to the well-known Paseo de la Reforma avenue, where the procession was met by a full military escort. Members from the escort carefully transferred Amaro's coffin to a four-wheeled carriage pulled by a team of horses and led by cadets from the Heroico Colegio Militar. An official placed Amaro's sword and military cap on the coffin, and the procession then continued toward the cemetery. Three of Amaro's horses, riderless, followed behind.

Thousands of people lined the streets of Mexico City's Paseo de la Reforma as the funeral procession slowly made its way through the famed Chapultepec Park, where Amaro once enjoyed riding his favorite horse, *La Sultana*. Upon exiting the park, the procession then veered south on Lieja, which, after a short distance, became Sonora Avenue. Continuing along the tree-lined avenue, the procession eventually reached the street named after Amaro's great friend and patron, Alvaro Obregón, which it then

²⁷*Revista del Ejército y de la Marina*, (January – March 1952), 146.

²⁸*Excelsior* (Mexico City), March 17, 1952

followed until finally arriving at Cuauhtémoc Avenue, the last leg of the procession's long journey. Accompanying the procession were regiments from several of the military schools Amaro had created, as well as a long entourage of generals who at some point in their careers had served on Amaro's general staff. As it made its way down Cuauhtémoc Avenue, the procession finally reached the gates of the cemetery, *Panteón Francés de la Piedad*, where it was met by members of the army's 50th Battalion. Amaro's body was then taken to the gravesite, where President Miguel Alemán—surrounded by Amaro's widow, family members, and numerous dignitaries—stood silently as a government official stepped forward to pronounce the funeral oration for General Joaquín Amaro:

Amaro's grand undertaking was that of preventing the army, formed in so motley a manner, from becoming a collection of gangs at the service of the most audacious, instead of maintaining with an iron will the necessary discipline to serve only the nation and its institutions. But that task was accomplished with untiring tenacity and with immeasurably great success by General Amaro, who we come here to honor at death's door.²⁹

As Amaro's coffin was lowered into the grave, a bugler played taps. Tears streamed down the face of Amaro's wife, who until then had remained remarkably strong. As the final, sad notes of taps faded, members of the 50th Battalion fired a salvo from their 105 mm howitzer cannons. Twenty-one times the cannons fired, the loud booming sound piercing the air in a final tribute to Mexico's fallen general, the man who tamed Mexico's tiger.

²⁹“La labor titánica de Amaro fué la de evitar que el Ejército formado tan abigarradamente, se convirtiese en conglomerado de pandillas al servicio de los más audaces, en vez de mantener férramente la disciplina necesaria para servir sólo a la Patria y a sus instituciones; pero esa labor la realizó con tenacidad incansable y con buen éxito imponderable, el general Amaro que aquí venimos a honrar al borde de la tumba.” Ibid.

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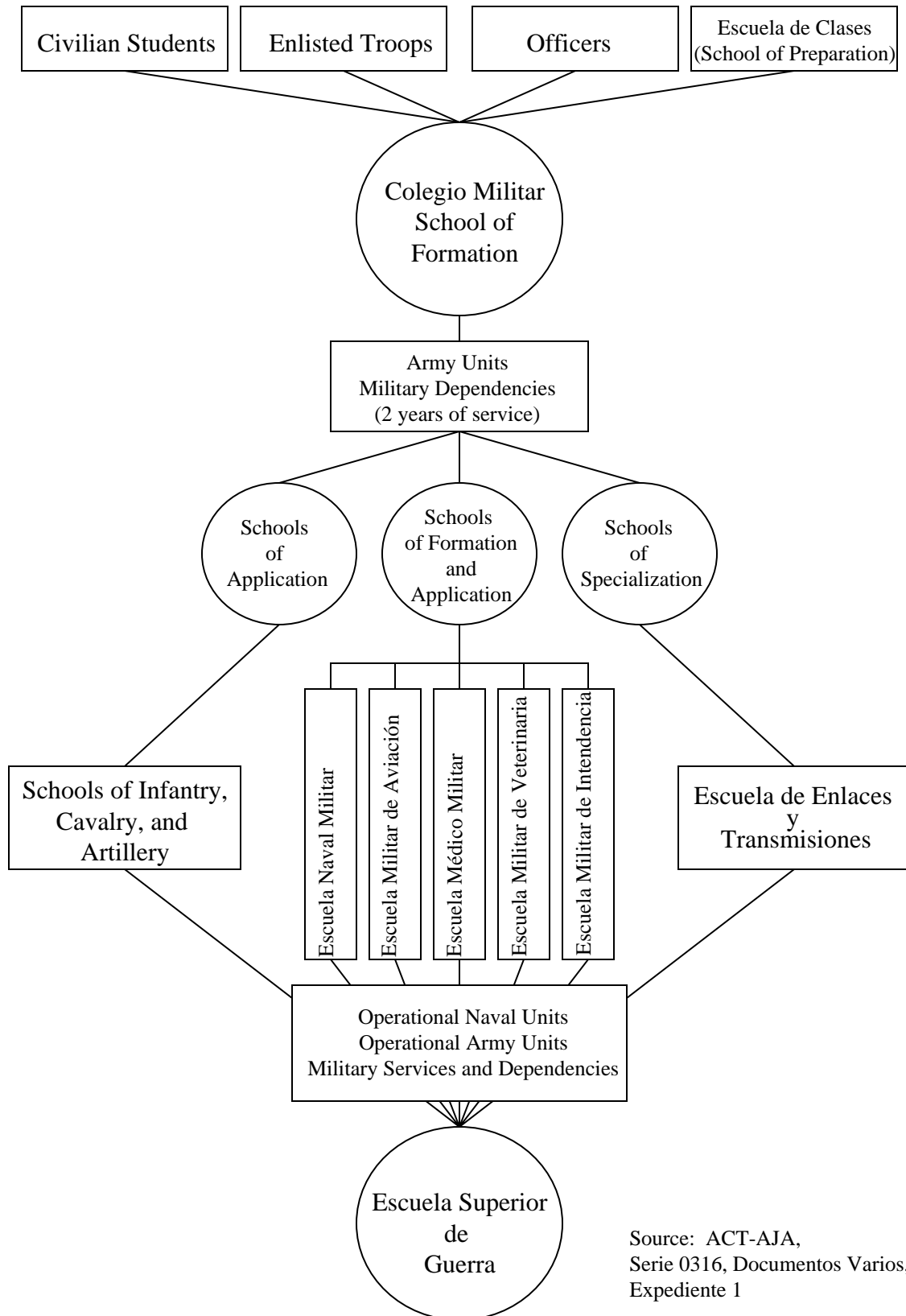
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Figure 1. Military Education Process in Mexico

Source: ACT-AJA,
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